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JS Bach

Solo Violin Sonatas and Partitas, BWV1001-1006

Johnny Gandelsman ^{vn}

In a Circle (F) (2) ICR101 (124' • DDD)



Bach's Violin Sonatas and Partitas are among the most frequently

performed works for the instrument, or any instrument. Recordings evince a spectrum of approaches, from historical treatments on period instruments to concepts Romantic and beyond. Among the newest journeys is Johnny Gandelsman's freshly considered account of these monuments. The violinist, a co-founder of the string quartet Brooklyn Rider and a member of Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Ensemble, imbues the music with a lean, focused sound, animating rhythmic impulses, and sterling attention to line and harmonic implication.

Gandelsman plays his modern violin with gut strings, transitional bow and whispers of vibrato, offering something of a crossover view of the Sonatas and Partitas. The performances abound in nuance and character, with every note, even in multiple stops, emerging in lucid detail. But what's most arresting is the violinist's ability to tie phrases together with seamless inevitability and provide a fluent sense of structure from beginning to end. Gandelman's keen ear for the long-term is most evident in Partita No 2's mammoth Chaconne, which he shapes with both forthright vigour and ruminative elasticity. Some violinists stress the work's epic and spiritual ramifications; Gandelsman's subtle urgency has its own commanding impact, especially given the taste and agility of the reading.

In the various dance movements, the violinist revels in the music's irresistible motion, whether lilting or courtly, almost as if he is improvising. And Gandelsman imbeds himself in the interweaving layers of the fugues to luminous effect.

Donald Rosenberg

GRAMOPHONE talks to ...

Johnny Gandelsman

The violinist and co-founder of Brooklyn Rider discusses his debut solo recording of Bach

Was it a challenge to plunge straight into Bach for your first solo recording?

Not really. Over the the last three years I've performed all six Sonatas and Partitas in concert about 30 times, which has been deeply rewarding. I wanted to capture this moment of personal learning and growth.

Does your varied musical diet - folk, jazz, classical - influence your approach to Bach?

Absolutely. Through my work with Brooklyn Rider and Silk Road Ensemble I have been lucky to work with incredible masters of various non-classical traditions. When working on the opening movement of the G minor Sonata, for example, I tried to imagine how the great Iranian kamancheh virtuoso Kayhan Kalhor would approach and develop an improvisation. When working on the Partitas, I often thought of the incredible Irish fiddler Martin Hayes. Like Kayhan, Martin is a magician with the bow, with great articulation and maximum freedom of expression.



Do you miss the collaborative process when playing alone, or is it in some sense liberating?

One of the reasons I wanted to work on solo Bach at this point in my life was to focus inward, after spending almost two decades mostly working in collaborative settings. I found it incredibly fulfilling, from carrying sole musical responsibility for a performance to the simple things like travelling by myself. Of course there are moments of self doubt, and those are particularly lonely and frustrating, but overall it's been a good journey.

What is your next recording project?

I have some ideas - watch this space!

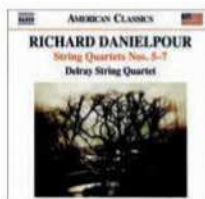
Danielpour

String Quartets - No 5, 'In Search of La vita nuova'; No 6, 'Addio'; No 7, 'Psalms of Solace'

Hila Plitmann ^{sop} Delray Quartet

Naxos American Classics (M) 8 559845

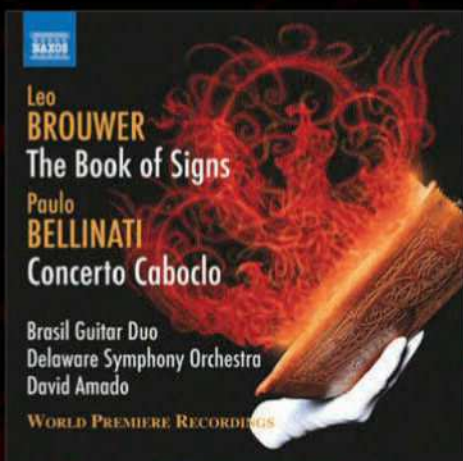
(76' • DDD • T/I)



As with his symphonies and concertos, Richard Danielpour (b1956) likes to give his

quartets (there are seven, spread fairly evenly through his career) descriptive titles. No 5 (2004) bears the sobriquet *In Search of La vita nuova*, a quotation from Dante

indicative of Danielpour's longstanding love of Italy, where it and its successor, *Addio* (2009), were composed. The Fifth's three modest movements, written for and intended to give pleasure primarily, follow a moderate-fast-slow pattern repeated but extended in No 6, an altogether more ambitious work with a gravity missing from the Fifth. Danielpour writes in the notes that the Sixth 'narrates the story of how families are eventually broken apart through distance, time, and ultimately through death'; the close of the opening movement has the same moving simplicity as Barber's *Adagio* (originally written as part of a string quartet), but without the melodic distinction.



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Compelling: the Boston Modern Orchestra Project under Gil Rose recording works by Jeremy Gill

Overall, the Sixth is a fine, if – at 28 minutes – overlong achievement, its coda a set of variations where the players leave the stage one by one until the cellist alone remains, the others accompanying the final bars offstage. I was less taken by Quartet No 7, *Psalms of Solace* (2014), described as ‘the search for the Divine’ via the ‘intellect, the force of will, and romantic love’, culminating in the finale’s prayer with its soprano solo, powerfully sung here by Hila Plitmann. The music is often expressively static, irrespective of the amount of surface detail; if the search was in vain it strikes me that Danielpour’s heart was not in it. That certainly cannot be said of the Delray Quartet, whose advocacy is totally committed. Naxos’s sound is rather airless and two-dimensional but perfectly clear. **Guy Rickards**

Gill

Before the Wrestling Tides^a. Notturmo concertante^b. Serenada concertante^c
^aErin Hannigan *ob* ^bChris Grymes *cl*
^aChing-Yun Hu *pf* ^aMarsh Chapel Choir;
 Boston Modern Orchestra Project / Gil Rose
 BMOP/sound © 1055 (57' • DDD • T)



The music of the past is of near endless fascination to Jeremy Gill (b1975) and,

while in no sense a pastiche composer, many of his works illustrate that fascination and highlight the context into which they fit. The three works on this involving Boston Modern Orchestra Project disc have this trait in common to greater or lesser degrees.

Before the Wrestling Tides was written in 2012 as a companion piece to Beethoven’s *Choral Fantasy*, for performances in Philadelphia early the following year. Although using similar forces to Beethoven’s, Gill made no attempt to write in a Beethovenian manner and his cantata (setting verses by Hart Crane) is structured very differently. The core of the work is the five stanzas of Crane’s ‘Voyages II’, alternating the chorus with duets for soloists within the main body of singers; this is then framed and punctuated by piano, the orchestra accompanying throughout.

Serenada concertante (2013) and *Notturmo concertante* (2014) were conceived as a pair of short concerto-type works, the one for oboe, its companion for clarinet, when a pair of commissions arrived serendipitously in close order in the composer’s mailbox. In both pieces the impact of the past is more musically present, not least derived from the favourite works of the two commissioning soloists (and performers here), oboist Erin Hannigan (who chose ‘Mozart, Strauss and Goossens’) and clarinetist Chris Grymes, whose dream about a mis-playing of

Nielsen’s Concerto furnished the thematic impetus for Gill’s compellingly active and varied *Notturmo concertante*. (Nielsen is eventually quoted six and a half minutes before the end.) The lighter, playful *Serenada concertante* is more allusive, using the named forebears as models rather than quoting directly. The playing throughout is superb, the recording first-rate, making this a very warmly recommendable disc.

Guy Rickards

Martin

Concerto for Wind Instruments and Piano.
 Ein Totentanz zu Basel im Jahre 1943 –
 Concert Suite. Zwischen Rhone und Rhein
 Massachusetts Chamber Players /
 Matthew Westgate
 MSR Classics © MS1602 (53' • DDD)



This fascinating tribute to Frank Martin is dominated by a chamber edition of nine movements from *Ein Totentanz zu Basel im Jahre 1943*, a piece Martin composed for his niece, the mime artist Mariette von Meyenberg, to accompany a theatrical presentation of eight meetings with Death. The music, which initially seems tame enough, philosophically derived and therefore harmless, begins to take on an increasingly sombre, ritual

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Pictured: Cecilia Bartoli (Decca/© Uli Weber/St Petersburg 2014) who featured on the November 2014 cover of Gramophone. Full annual retail price for print only (13 issues) is \$136.50; print only annual subscription, Digital Edition and reviews Database (\$94); Digital Club (\$130); Gramophone Club (\$168). Postage and packaging is not included for overseas orders. Overseas subscription p&p: Europe \$28.99 Rest of World \$35.75. If you have a subscription enquiry then please email subscriptions@markallengroup.com



In the Weeds: Ventus Machina's debut disc contains mostly unfamiliar works for wind quintet – see review on page VII

air. Martin uses his consummate ease at handling a wide range of materials – in addition to mainstream and contemporary classical currents, he lets himself be influenced by jazz, folk music and the theatre – to work from within an intellectually conservative context to produce occasional moments of authentic emotion, undoubtedly a reflection of the time and place at which they were written. The forces recruited by conductor Matthew Westgate for the recording comprise faculty members, freelancers and top students and the playing is well coached, vital and virtuoso; check out the trumpet riff in 'Dance with the Athlete' or the searing alto sax in 'The Dance with the Mother and her Child'. It captures the emotion.

There is also much to enjoy from the elegant trombonist in the Concerto for Winds and Piano – two movements Martin wrote in 1924 for a Parisian puppet theatre that employed many artists from Diaghilev's Ballets Russes – but the *Zwischen Rhone und Rhein* march is barely worth a parody.

The stunning recordings were made at the University of Massachusetts; the large military side instruments called Basel Drums on track 3 play uninterrupted for 90 seconds of pure audiophile hell – or delight. **Laurence Vittes**

Moravec

The Blizzard Voices

Emily Pulley, Deborah Selig *sops* **Erica Brookhyser**

mez **Matthew Dibattista** *ten* **David Kravitz** *bar*

David Crushing *bass-bar* **New England**

Conservatory Concert Choir and Chamber Singers; Boston Modern Orchestra Project / Gil Rose

BMOP/sound ④ 1054 (61' • DDD/DSD • T)



Paul Moravec's ambitious *The Blizzard Voices* chronicles a snowstorm that

suddenly struck across the upper Midwest in 1888 and killed hundreds, including a large number of children returning home from school. It is a secular oratorio, the third of the composer's 'American Historical' series of large-scale choral works, and brings an impressive battery of musical resources to the task. Based on the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and essayist Ted Kooser's book of the same name and commissioned by Opera Omaha, *The Blizzard Voices* was premiered in 2008, taken to Carnegie Hall in 2013 and has now received its first recording, made in 2015 at Mechanics Hall in Worcester, Massachusetts.

A Prologue opens with ominous Mahlerian octaves. The blizzard itself

comes early on, with lightning and a cataclysmic rush that suggests Verdi's Requiem and engulfs the simple children's games and all else before it. This sets the scene for a series of testimonials from survivors and victims that serve as a powerful theme-and-variations narrative context; after the impersonal, implacable opening, the emergence of individual voices is all the more welcome and engaging, although I don't hear much of the Midwest in either the text or the music.

The composer says in his booklet notes that 'a well-balanced mixed chorus singing perfectly in tune strikes me as the most beautiful and resonant of sonorities'. The New England Conservatory Concert Choir and Chamber Singers give him all that and, with expert work from the orchestra and earnest, generally splendid work from the soloists, give a passionate and committed performance. **Laurence Vittes**

Volker

'Young Prometheus'

Dust to Dust^a. Echoes of Yesterday^b.

Three Quotations^c. Young Prometheus^d

^d**Carolyn Treybig** *fl* ^{bd}**Matthew Davich** *cl*

^a**Katelyn Westergard**, ^a**Alicia Enstrom**,

^d**Alison Gooding Hoffman** *vns* ^a**Jim Grosjean** *va*

^d**Stephen Drake**, ^a**Emily Nelson** *vcs*

^d**Kristian Klefstad** *pf* ^c**Luna Nova Ensemble**

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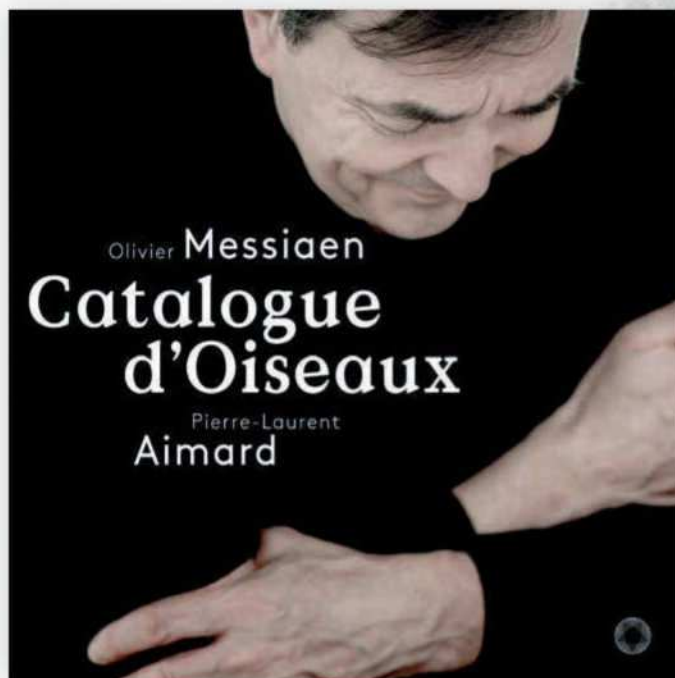
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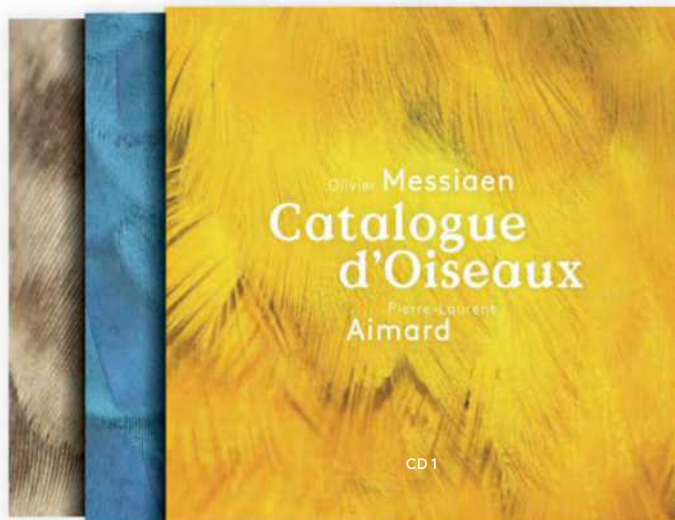


ABOUT THE ALBUM

Olivier Messiaen: Catalogue d'Oiseaux

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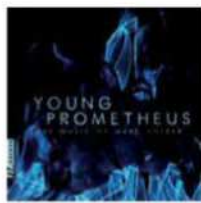
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More than half of this disc of music by the American composer Mark Volker is devoted to the titular *Young Prometheus*, a suite drawn from an updated ballet inspired by Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The ballet's protagonist (and title) is Frank, described in the booklet note as 'a young, disfigured middle school misfit "created" by adolescence and society'.

Volker's music for the ballet eschews horror-film blood and thunder. Instead, the tale of Frank and his path from outsider to admired figure is depicted in eight scenes of colourful and propulsive activity. Scored for flute, clarinet, violin, cello and piano, the work reveals Volker's gift for dramatic incident and portraiture. Buoyant rhythmic elements, sometimes nudged by jazz inflections, keep tense and exuberant moments on their toes. Aside from its roots in dance, the suite is an appealing chamber piece the musicians on this recording play with vivid artistry.

The scoring is identical, with clarinet doubling on bass clarinet, in *Three Quotations*, inspired by quotes from Robert Aitken, Sylvia Plath and Alvin Toffler; the piece is a fine example of the composer's affinity for moody lyricism and spunky metrical changes. A string quartet evokes a painting by Raphaëlle Goethals in *Dust to Dust*, in which Volker binds poignant and impassioned gestures to summon 'the ephemeral, but substantive, progression of human life'.

Matthew Davich is the excellent soloist in *Echoes of Yesterday* for clarinet and interactive electronics. The work's atmospheres are generated as the clarinet prompts all sorts of sonic responses from a computer, which is more than amenable to entering into magical and otherworldly conversation.

Donald Rosenberg

'In the Weeds'

'Music for Wind Quintet'

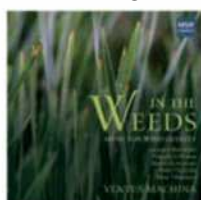
Bernstein *West Side Story* - Suite (arr Price)

D'Rivera *Aires tropicales* Kutnowski *Tonadas y mateadas* Piazzolla *Milonga sin palabras*

Titlebaum *Short Set*

Ventus *Machina*

MSR Classics © MS1633 (60' • DDD)



This is an engaging – and engagingly played – programme of mostly unfamiliar

music for wind quintet. The New Brunswick-based Ventus Machina are relatively young, formed as recently as 2011, and their first full CD includes two pieces written specially for them (by Martin Kutnowski and Mike Titlebaum), two neat arrangements and one of their favourite items, by some way the largest work here, Cuban-born Paquito D'Rivera's seven-movement suite *Aires tropicales* (1994).

Like D'Rivera, well known as a jazz performer and composer, Ventus Machina have a foot in jazz and popular music, genre experience that serves them well in D'Rivera's musical travelogue of Spanish America. There is a marked crossover aspect to the opening work, Titlebaum's *Short Set* (2016), too, the central movement of which is loosely based on Billy Strayhorn's *Isfahan*. The finale provides the disc's title, relating to the quintet's home base near the Tantramar salt marsh by the Bay of Fundy.

The other commissioned work included is *Tonadas y mateadas* (2015), a single-movement tone picture the title of which could loosely be translated as 'Tunes sung drinking with friends'. There is a slightly boozy jocularly about Kutnowski's musical discourse which is rather diverting. Despite his Eastern European name, Kutnowski – also resident in New Brunswick – was born in Argentina and *Tonadas y mateadas* evokes the warm nights of Buenos Aires amid the snows of Eastern Canada. William Scribner's arrangement of Piazzolla's *Song Without Words* is nicely done but given here in the quintet's own adaptation replacing the oboe with a cor anglais. With a timely nod to the Bernstein centenary, Richard Price's 1989 arrangement of four songs from *West Side Story* makes a pleasant encore. **Guy Rickards**

'Windows'

Bruce *The Shadow of the Blackbird*

Matheson *Windows* Schumann *Arabeske*, Op 18. *Kinderszenen*, Op 15

Bruce Levingston *pf*

Sono Luminus © DSL92218 (69' • DDD)



Bruce Levingston's annual solo CD releases follow a pattern consisting of a poetic title and a programme interweaving old and new music. 'Windows' is true to form, with works by David Bruce and James Mattheson (both b1970) bracketing Schumann's venerable *Kinderszenen* and *Arabeske*.

The first movement of David Bruce's *The Shadow of the Blackbird* uses the opening notes from Schumann's *Kreisleriana* to launch a rhapsodic, Spanish-tinged fantasia that slows down into an introspective chordal episode anchored by slow repeated notes. The repeated notes return in the manner of flamenco-like flourishes as the music builds to a climax and slowly retreats to a quiet conclusion. Next to this movement's freewheeling flow, the slow and sparsely lit second movement seems like an anticlimax. Reversing the movements might guarantee better box office but for now I'll grant David Bruce the benefit of the doubt.

Doubt, however, is the operative word in regard to Levingston's *Kinderszenen*. The pianist follows his overstressed opening piece with a rhythmically stiff No 2 and a No 3 hampered by ambling detached articulation. The child depicted in No 4 is not so much pleading as emoting, while Levingston lays heavily into No 5's inner lines. Happily, No 6's pompous processional chords are spot-on; but the pianist's overly protracted No 7, 'Träumerei' ('Dreaming'), ought to be retitled 'Comatose'. By No 8, one really begins to notice Levingston's irritating habit of starting certain pieces under tempo and gradually picking up speed. No 9's hobby-horse has rarely sounded so heavy-handed and foursquare. Levingston's slow-motion crawl through No 13, 'Der Dichter spricht' ('The Poet Speaks'), also warrants a new title: 'Der Dichter stirbt' ('The Poet Dies'). Similarly, Levingston's sensitive and intimately shaped *Arabeske* is let down by a deathly slow coda.

James Matheson's title selection is a five-part suite depicting a series of stained glass windows created by Marc Chagall. Much of the music evokes the statically sonorous, declamatory keyboard aesthetic characterising many of Olivier Messaien's works or Liszt's late style, with Philip Glass peering in for a look. Yet Matheson goes his own creative way. The second-to-last movement is constructed from obsessive yet carefully crafted arpeggios that start in the piano's high registers and gradually descend to the bass, returning upwards. There's also impressive textural and emotional variety in the final movement's long chains of repeated bass notes and reiterated chords.

Sono Luminus's resonantly ample engineering particularly lends itself to Matheson's vibrant writing and Levingston's compelling, colourful pianism. Judging from this release, Levingston is far better suited to new music than he is to Schumann. **Jed Distler**

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The focus, and fun, offered by music festivals

Such are the long lead times of monthly magazines – and, more to the matter, the vagaries of the weather – that we completed our annual festival guide this year while snow fell steadily and travel was generally discouraged. Never has reading about interval picnics on country-house lawns, let alone hikes up to mountainside sculptures for late-night solo Bach, seemed so far removed from the reality outside.

But, in a strange way, what makes music festivals so special is, indeed, that sense of being removed from reality. We all have our own favourite memories of music festivals – what are yours? I'd hazard a guess that landscape, setting and even weather are as integral to those evocative recollections as the music-making. From one festival alone – Aldeburgh – I can recall both the powerful tranquillity of stepping from a concert to see the summer sun setting scenically over the Suffolk reed beds, and on another occasion our car needing to pull in to the side of the road when an unseasonal deluge made driving impossible, straight after hearing Britten's *Four Sea Interludes*. These experiences are an inseparable part of the overall memory, though that's as it should be: great art is never meant to exist in abstract isolation, but to be experienced within the context of our lives and the world around us. So it's about more than simply enjoying pretty scenery. The focus that can be achieved by removing oneself from the chaos of a city, or the crowded commute, or the juggling of commitments, can make us listen differently and more reflectively. Not to knock the attraction of scenery of



course – we all go on holiday to enjoy new locations, whether walking in hills or exploring unfamiliar urban architecture – but why not combine that with some world-class music-making? Everything you need to know about what's on offer this summer is in our 26-page guide: we hope you enjoy it, and most importantly enjoy wherever it takes you!

Also this month, you'll see that we've further increased our focus on reissues. Everyone (except perhaps *Gramophone's* postman) is impressed by the dedication and care currently being lavished on box-sets, whether in remastering, or the invariably beautifully presented packages themselves, full of both written and visual context. We've tried to keep up to date with these through our Reissues pages, but from this month you'll find a new monthly column by Rob Cowan devoted to box-sets. Together with the familiar Reissues pages, with Rob's long-running Replay column devoted to historical issues and our Classics Reconsidered feature – in which two critics reassess the status of a 'classic' recording of the past – we hope our new section will encourage you to spend some time thinking about, and listening to, the artists and recordings of the past.

Speaking of which, next month we'll be celebrating an extraordinary artist from the past century, the great Swedish soprano Birgit Nilsson. And for those not familiar with her legacy, we'll be bringing readers a free CD featuring tracks from a forthcoming celebratory box-set from Sony Classical and the Birgit Nilsson Foundation.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'Visiting Berlin's Philharmonie is always a joy,' says **JAMES JOLLY** 'and sitting through a performance

under Robin Ticciati of Bruckner's Sixth in the empty hall was the cherry on the cake. Afterwards, I caught up with him, a conductor I've long admired and have been following for quite a while.'



'The finest recorded performances remind us that Handel composed *Saul* in a state of feverish

excitement,' writes our Collection author **RICHARD WIGMORE**. 'Prolonged immersion only enhanced my passion for a work whose range and depth merit the over-used adjective Shakespearean.'



'Pierre-Laurent Aimard could not have been a more charming and helpful guide through a masterpiece that

had always intimidated me,' says **PETER QUANTTRILL** of Messiaen's *Catalogue d'Oiseaux*. 'The Musician and the Score is a perfect title for the synthesis I saw between man and music.'

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

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NEW RELEASES ON WARNER CLASSICS AND ERATO



JOYCE DIDONATO GREAT SCOTT

Life meets art as Joyce DiDonato stars in the world-premiere recording of Great Scott, a new opera written especially for her by Jake Heggie.



AUGUSTIN HADELICH PAGANINI: 24 CAPRICES

Winner in 2015 of the inaugural Warner Music Prize, Hadelich releases his first recording for Warner Classics: Paganini's 24 Caprices for solo violin.



ALEXANDRE THARAUD & JEAN-GUIHEN QUEYRAS BRAHMS: SONATAS

Pianist Alexandre Tharaud and cellist Jean-Guihen Queyras in a programme of two Brahms cello sonatas and Hungarian Dance transcriptions.



EDGAR MOREAU & DAVID KADOUCH SONATAS

Cellist Edgar Moreau and pianist David Kadouch in a programme of sonatas by Franck, Poulenc, Rita Stroh and Fernand de La Tombelle.



PIOTR ANDERSZEWSKI MOZART: PIANO CONCERTOS

This pairing of concertos Nos 25 and 27, recorded with Chamber Orchestra of Europe is Piotr Anderszewski's third album of Mozart concertos.



GAUTIER CAPUÇON INTUITION

A captivating album of short pieces brining together much-loved lollipops by Saint-Saëns, Fauré, Massenet, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov and Elgar.



RENAUD CAPUÇON BARTÓK: VIOLIN CONCERTOS

Renaud Capuçon expands his wide-ranging concerto discography performing Bartók with the London Symphony Orchestra under François-Xavier Roth.



KYUNG WHA CHUNG FRANCK & DEBUSSY SONATAS

The centrepiece of this French-themed recital by legendary violinist Kyung Wha Chung is the splendid violin sonata by César Franck.



LES VENTS FRANÇAIS FEAT. EMMANUEL PAHUD CONCERTANTE!

The members of Les Vents Français, which has been described as "the wind-quintet equivalent of a supergroup" in five examples of the sinfonia concertante.



DAVID AARON CARPENTER MOTHERLAND

The star violist brings together concertos by Dvořák, Bartók, Walton and a dance cycle by contemporary composer Alexey Shor.



STILE ANTICO TENEBRAE RESPONSORIES

TOMÁS LUIS DE VICTORIA

The office of Tenebrae, from the liturgy of Holy Week, has always fascinated the public and offered fertile ground for composers to exercise their gifts. Such was the case for Victoria, whose exclusively sacred output, nourished by the multiple influences of his years in Rome, offers pride of place to his Tenebrae settings. These Responsories display unparalleled expressive power and amply justify his reputation as the greatest polyphonist of the Spanish Renaissance.



GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Culliford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



RACHMANINOV

The Bells.
Symphonic Dances
Sols; Bavarian Radio
Symphony
Orchestra /
Mariss Jansons
BR-Klassik
► **GEOFFREY
NORRIS'S REVIEW
IS ON PAGE 50**

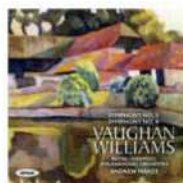
When the author of a Collection article elevates a new recording above his longstanding benchmark version – as reviewer Geoffrey Norris does here – you know it's something very special indeed.



MAHLER Symphony No 1
Düsseldorf Symphony
Orchestra / Adám Fischer
AVI-Music
There's a palpable excitement from critic

Edward Seckerson about this developing Mahler series, and justifiably so, the performances underpinned by an evident rapport between Fischer and his orchestra.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 61**



VAUGHAN WILLIAMS
Symphonies Nos 5 & 6
Royal Liverpool
Philharmonic Orchestra /
Andrew Manze
Onyx

Andrew Manze discussed his deep and longstanding affection for Vaughan Williams's music in last month's issue; that insight bears rich fruit here.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 67**



MARAIS Pièces de viole
La Réveuse
Mirare
This is a truly delightful recording of early 18th-century

French viol music, in which beauty of line and collegiality between players make for many exquisite moments, both delicate and joyfully lively.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 74**



MOZART
Violin Sonatas, Vol 5
Alina Ibragimova *vn*
Cédric Tiberghien *pf*
Hyperion
A superb series,

destined to become a benchmark in the repertoire, here closes with a disc that keeps up the exploratory approach and impeccable playing right to the very end.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 74**



'HOME'
Kian Soltani *vc*
Aaron Pilsan *pf*
DG
Kian Soltani is very much a young cellist

to watch – this album of well-chosen music, from Schubert and Schumann to Iranian composer Reza Vali, clearly draws deeply on his own artistic personality.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 77**



BEETHOVEN
Diabelli Variations
Martin Helmchen *pf*
Alpha
The second Diabelli release

from the same label in less than a year – but with a performance as virtuoso and imaginative as this from Martin Helmchen, it's more than justified!

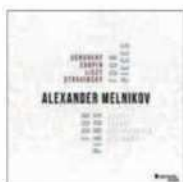
► **REVIEW ON PAGE 82**



MESSIAEN
Catalogue d'oiseaux
Pierre-Laurent Aimard *pf*
Pentatone
A fascinating work, the demands it makes

on performer and listener both great but rewarding, is brilliantly explored by a pianist, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, with a deep knowledge of the music of Messiaen.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 86**



'FOUR PIECES, FOUR PIANOS'
Alexander Melnikov *pf*
Harmonia Mundi
Alexander Melnikov talked readers through

his choice of piano for the Liszt piece in February; for Chopin, Schubert and Stravinsky he hand-picked three others. The results are hugely enjoyable.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 90**



'VENEZIA MILLENNARIA'
Hespèrion XXI; Le Concert
des Nations / Jordi Savall
Alia Vox
Another compelling and ear-opening historical journey by Jordi Savall, this time a portrait of that most beguiling of cities, Venice, wonderfully portrayed in diverse music from across a millennium.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 105**



DVD/BLU-RAY
'LES FUNÉRAILES ROYALES DE LOUIS XIV'
Sols; Pygmalion / Raphaël Pichon
Harmonia Mundi

A commemorative re-creation of the funeral service for the Sun King, filmed in (appropriately enough) Versailles: 'fantastic music-making in action', writes our reviewer David Vickers.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 102**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE
LISZT
'RIAS Recordings, Vol 2'
Jorge Bolet *pf*
Münchner Philharmoniker
The second volume

of this Jorge Bolet series, his virtuosity revealed in an all-Liszt programme.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 59**



Listen to many of the Editor's Choice recordings online at **qobuz.com**

FOR THE RECORD

Award-winning Takács Quartet name their new second violinist

Károly Schranz, second violinist with the Takács Quartet and one of the acclaimed ensemble's founding members, is to retire from the group on May 1. Harumi Rhodes (pictured second from right), assistant professor of violin at University of Colorado Boulder, where the ensemble are based, will replace him.

Schranz's career with the group spanned more than 40 years, and included many prestigious prizes, including *Gramophone* Chamber Awards for all three instalments of their Beethoven Quartet cycle on Decca. His final concerts with the group will take place on April 29 and 30 in Boulder; Rhodes will join the quartet for the second half of these concerts.



New organist replaces Darlington at Christ Church in September



After spending 32 years as Organist at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, Stephen Darlington will hand over responsibility for the choir to Steven Grahl (pictured) in September.

Christ Church is unique in being both college chapel and cathedral, and the role of organist involves conducting the choir in the daily services. In his time in the post, Darlington has conducted more than 50 recordings, including the recent series on Avie of music for the Eton Choirbook,

Volume Five of which was reviewed in the January issue. Steven Grahl moves from Peterborough Cathedral where he has been Director of Music since 2014; he recently recorded Cheryl Frances-Hoad's *Even You Song* with Peterborough Cathedral Choir for First Hand Records.

Film composer John Williams donates his scores to Juilliard

The composer John Williams is to give his entire library of film and concert music scores, along with his sketchbooks, to the Juilliard School. Williams – the recipient of five Oscars and 51 nominations (more than anyone else) – is the composer of some of the most famous movie music of all time, including *Star Wars*, *ET*, *Jaws*, the *Harry Potter* films, *Superman* and *Schindler's List*. Many of his most famous scores, several of which now make popular appearances in the concert hall, result from a 40-year artistic partnership with Steven Spielberg. The collection will prove an invaluable resource for students of film music.

Major new Decca box-set celebrates the art of Arrau

The iconic Chilean pianist Claudio Arrau (1903–91) is the subject of the latest mega box-set from Decca. Gathering his entire recorded legacy for Philips and American Decca, the 80-CD box includes two sets of the

Beethoven piano concertos (with Bernard Haitink and Sir Colin Davis) as well as a live DG recording of the Beethoven Fourth Piano Concerto conducted by Leonard Bernstein from an Amnesty International charity concert.

Also included are Arrau's two Beethoven piano sonata cycles (one analogue, one digital) as well as the violin sonatas with Arthur Grumiaux, the Mozart piano sonatas, and piano works by Debussy, Schubert, Schumann, Liszt and Brahms (including the two piano concertos). In addition, two interviews with Arrau are included: one features the Beethoven piano sonatas and the other focuses on the concertos (made for the 1964 Amsterdam cycle). The set will retail at around £160.



Watch Gramophone's new monthly selection of music films on medici.tv



Each month, *Gramophone* will be teaming up with **medici.tv** to offer a selection of recommended films. This year the music of Claude Debussy (pictured) is very much in our minds (he died in 1918) – scarcely a hardship as he left us some of the most incandescent and rewarding music of the early years of the 20th century. His works therefore feature in this month's selection; from the gloriously evocative seascape that is *La mer* (conducted by Charles Munch), via the infinitely inventive chamber and piano music (Nelson Freire), to his astounding opera *Pelléas et Mélisande* (from the Opéra National de Paris in Robert Wilson's staging), we've chosen some superb performances. In other news, Christa Ludwig turned 90 on March 16 and we celebrate this great mezzo in a performance of Schubert's *Winterreise*. There's also music from *Gramophone's* Young Artist of 2017, the pianist Beatrice Rana, and a glimpse into how music takes shape courtesy of Rachel Podger's

Bach Masterclass. Meanwhile, for a more modern approach to violin-playing, compare Oistrakh and Perlman in the Brahms Violin Concerto.

To find out more, visit medici.tv and type 'Gramophone selects' into the 'search here' box

ONE TO WATCH

Eldbjørg Hemsing Violinist

The 28-year old Norwegian violinist's performing career began very early – together with her sister Ranghild she was a famous child prodigy in her homeland, giving her first performance with the Bergen Philharmonic aged just 11. But her recording career now takes a big step forward with her first solo album, released on the BIS label to which she recently signed. Half of the record is Shostakovich's Violin Concerto No 1; its coupling, however, is a largely forgotten work – Hjalmar Borgstrøm's Violin Concerto in G major, first heard in 1914. Its sense of Norwegian identity clearly resonates with Hemsing, who speaks of its 'simple lyrical melodies and distinctive harmonies which conjure up the sound of the Hardanger fiddle. And for me that conjures up the image of the untouched, raw beauty of Norwegian nature – the deep fjords, wild coastline and in particular the beautiful mountain chain of Jotunheimen which is my home.' The recording, with the Vienna Symphony Orchestra conducted by Olari Elts, will be reviewed in the next issue of *Gramophone*. Looking ahead, Hemsing will give the world premiere of a new work by Tan Dun in



September, while her next album, out in the autumn, will feature Dvořák's Violin Concerto and Suk's Fantasy and *Love Song* with the Antwerp Symphony Orchestra and Alan Buribayev. There's also a documentary due out in the autumn, something Hemsing is no stranger to: in 2010, together with her sister, she featured in an exploration of the life of Norwegian violinist Ole Bull; this new one is about women in the arts, and Hemsing will be a major focus in it.

FOR THE RECORD

GRAMOPHONE Online

The magazine is just the beginning. Visit gramophone.co.uk for ...

The Listening Room

James Jolly's playlist and blog series 'The Listening Room' is the perfect place to discover the most interesting new classical recordings as soon as they are released and also to enjoy classic recordings by legendary artists. Each new episode in 'The Listening Room' series is created every week across three streaming platforms – Qobuz, Spotify and Apple Music – and each episode is accompanied by a blog in which James explores the music he has selected and draws fascinating and unexpected musical connections between a diverse range of recordings. New installments appear every



Friday, and it is a wonderful way to discover new music and recordings at a time when the almost limitless amount of music available to us online can, on occasion, be a bit daunting. To enjoy 'The Listening Room' follow *Gramophone* on Qobuz, Spotify and Apple Music. To read the accompanying blogs, please visit: gramophone.co.uk/blog/the-listening-room.

Podcast archive

The *Gramophone* Podcast archive on iTunes is a treasure trove of fascinating interviews with leading artists and composers, including Dame Kiri Te Kanawa, Murray Perahia, Riccardo Chailly and Dame Janet Baker. There are now more than 140 podcasts to enjoy and you can explore them all for free in iTunes, simply search for 'Gramophone Podcast'.

IN THE STUDIO

Thomas Søndergård has just this month recorded a programme of **Strauss** with the **RSNO**, inaugurating a new series featuring this conductor-orchestra partnership (Søndergård takes over as Principal Conductor in September). The recording – of works including *Ein Heldenleben* and *Der Rosenkavalier Suite* – is released on Linn in the spring to coincide with a US tour. ● Countertenor **Andrew Watts** was at Potton Hall, Suffolk, last month for a 'Countertenor Songbook' with pianist **Iain Burnside**. The resulting recording, on NMC, will be released later this year. ● **Sir John Eliot Gardiner** has just recorded

Schumann's Symphonies Nos 2 and 4 with the **LSO** for the first instalment of his new **Schumann cycle**. The works were recorded live in concert at the Barbican on March 11 and 15, and, together with the *Genoveva Overture*, will be included on an album to be released on LSO Live early in 2019. ● Pianist **Louis Lortie** and cellist **Paul Watkins** were at Watford Colosseum in February to record their contributions to an all-**Finzi** disc, to be released on Chandos in the summer. The *Grand Fantasia and Toccata* for piano and orchestra and the Cello Concerto were accompanied by the BBC SO under Andrew Davis.

STUDIO FOCUS *Jean-Guihen Queyras*

The cellist on recording Debussy's Cello Sonata for an all-star, all-Debussy disc on Harmonia Mundi, out in October

You're one of several musicians contributing to this Debussy sonata disc ...

I am only one piece of the puzzle, so this recording has been the simplest I've ever done! We did it in one day, back in January at Berlin's Teldex Studios. It was a very different experience compared to recording an entire CD and having to immerse yourself in another space and time. I normally find recordings quite exhausting, but this one was actually very enjoyable.

This was the first time you'd ever worked with pianist Javier Perianes ...

Javier and I have known each other for a long while but we've never recorded together, or even played concerts together – so I was a bit nervous! I have actually recorded this sonata before, with Alexandre Tharaud, but it's an important piece in the cello repertoire and I was interested to record it again with someone new. You'd never think of improvising with a new partner in a recording of the Brahms sonatas of course – Alexandre and I played them for 20 years before we recorded them – but with the Debussy there's the sort of dialogue where spontaneity has a huge role to play.



What was the rapport like between you and Perianes?

I knew his playing, I knew I would connect with him, and it was extremely inspiring. It's mostly the cello who has to dictate this piece, musically, while the piano's in the background doing interesting and unexpected things that can influence the interpretation. And in fact, Javier was very much *asking* me to be the leader – he'd say, 'Just do what you want to do'. He's an extremely supple, flexible musician and he didn't want me to compromise to make things easy for him.

What makes this a significant piece?

The Cello Sonata was written shortly before Debussy's death and reveals him at his most radical – it's a piece that, in some places, is at the frontier between music and musical theatre. One cannot play it like a normal

sonata with long phrases that go on and on – it's more like a collage, but one should be careful that it doesn't fall apart and also that it's not 'overplayed' in a theatrical sense. I have done a lot of new music, and I find the writing here extremely modern and forward-looking – which is probably why I feel such a connection with it. It has this

intellectual yet witty quality, a very special character and style. It breaks the rules and opens the door onto 20th-century possibilities.

You'd worked with the engineer/producer Martin Sauer before ...

I've done many recordings with him – he's so incredibly experienced which is very valuable. On this occasion, Javier and I were like two eager kids so we needed his influence – he gave us some order! We all wanted to keep things fresh, and Martin is someone who doesn't like to do too many takes anyway, so we ran through each movement about three times and then we made our corrections. With Martin, once I have the edited version we'll normally do two 'back-and-forths' and then that will be it. In fact, I've just been sent a link to the final edit – I'm curious to hear it!



Pappano and colleagues celebrate Bernstein

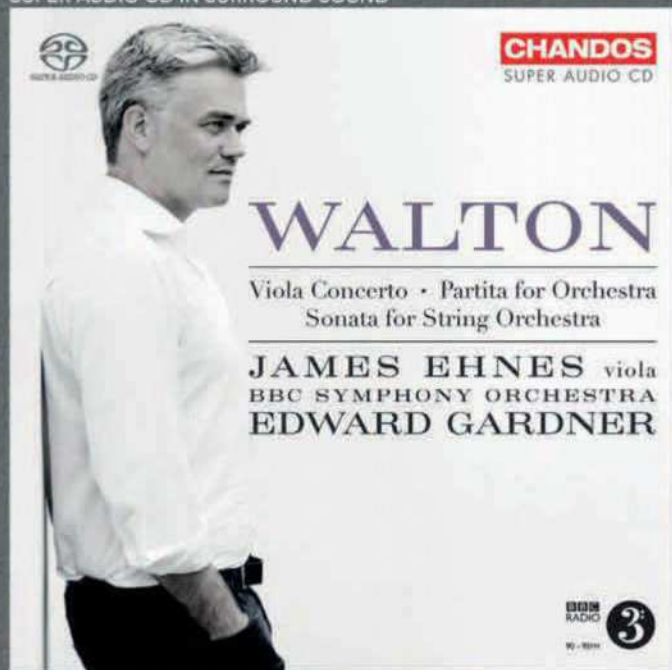
Last month, *Gramophone's* current Young Artist of the Year, the pianist Beatrice Rana, joined Sir Antonio Pappano and the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia for a live recording of Leonard Bernstein's Symphony No 2, *The Age of Anxiety*. It will form part of a late-summer release on Warner Classics to include all three of Bernstein's symphonies, with mezzo

Marie-Nicole Lemieux and soprano Nadine Sierra as soloists in the *Jeremiah* (No 1) and the *Kaddish* (No 3) respectively. Also included will be the *Prelude, Fugue and Riffs* played by the orchestra's Principal Clarinet, Alessandro Carbonare. Each of the two concerts was given three times and supplemented by a patch session. Our own James Jolly was there and caught up with the artists for a future *Gramophone* Podcast.

CHANDOS
THE SOUND OF CLASSICAL

APRIL RELEASES

SUPER AUDIO CD IN SURROUND SOUND



Disc of the Month WALTON

ORCHESTRAL WORKS, VOL. 3

James Ehnes | BBC Symphony Orchestra
Edward Gardner

'With Walton's Viola Concerto, none of the writing is impossible but a lot of it is close. And in a way that is exactly where you want it to be: on the edge of technical limitations. There's a tremendous amount of excitement in that.' So says James Ehnes, who switches from his violin to tackle a monument in the viola's literature, all superbly captured in surround sound.

CHSA 5210

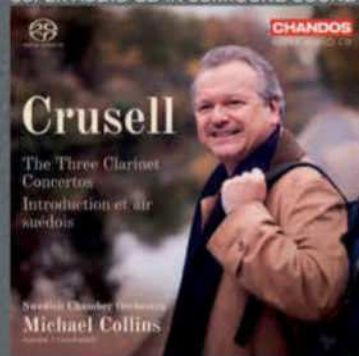


BACEWICZ CHAMBER WORKS

Silesian Quartet and friends

Unusual chamber pieces (including a quartet for four violins) feature in this rare Bacewicz programme full of contrast and individuality, played by Gramophone Award-winning Silesian Quartet and friends.

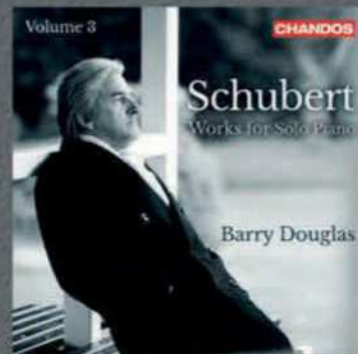
SUPER AUDIO CD IN SURROUND SOUND



CRUSELL THE THREE CLARINET CONCERTOS

Michael Collins
Swedish Chamber Orchestra

A thrilling revelation of clarinet treasures by the Finnish composer Bernhard Henrik Crusell, played and conducted by Michael Collins.



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Barry Douglas

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STAY IN THE KNOW



ARTISTS & THEIR INSTRUMENTS

Pavel Kolesnikov on his chosen Yamaha CFX Concert Grand



“I’m always looking for some interesting new repertoire, but it was quite unexpected to find Louis Couperin and this amazing collection of pieces. I didn’t know much about him, nor had heard anything except the odd piece. It’s very rare to discover something so strong. He is very unique; there are several styles and points of view mixing together in his music. You can hear different influences: the harpsichord, lute music, singing, and also an unusual German influence that comes from Couperin’s obsession with Froberger. It’s already Baroque, yet most of the time one can hear Renaissance too. This music is on the edge in many respects.

I must say that I had no intention at all of making my piano sound like a harpsichord. Absolutely not. I don’t see the point of doing that on a contemporary piano. The point of using a contemporary instrument was to bring the uniqueness and power of this music, with all those influences I mentioned, into the limelight. It’s like paying a coin in a Venetian church to spotlight one of its masterpieces. I had the ideal sound for this in mind, and I started looking for the right instrument. I was quite desperate – I tried some Steinways and it didn’t work at all, and I tried Fazioli and it again didn’t quite work, and finally, completely unexpectedly, a rather short time before the recording was scheduled, I found this Yamaha and thought it was something that could work. It’s a piano which is extremely resonant, and there is a lot of tension in the sound. I don’t know for sure but my impression

is that the sound has strong low and high frequencies, but not so much in the middle of the range – and this was exactly what I was looking for. This piano was at the Yamaha CF Centre in London, and I have a good relationship with Yamaha as I work with them sometimes – I recently used a Yamaha for my Cadogan Hall Prom. I like Yamaha very much, particularly for the fact that they are so open-minded and are ready to work with and twist the piano, to tailor the action endlessly – basically there is no ‘no’ there at all.

I didn’t really have to do much to the piano, it was very good as it was. We did a little bit of work on the action so the response of the keyboard was very subtle, as it often is with Yamaha. It is very light, and at the same time extremely sensitive, and you really just need to have an intention and the instrument follows it – it’s quite a magical thing. And we had two different actions. Yamaha is working on the development of their pianos at the CF Centre and they have some interesting prototypes – so I used two of the actions that were quite new; one is a little bit more percussive in the sound, the another more singing, and dark-toned and mellow. We changed the action during the recording for different pieces – and in some cases even for different sections within pieces. It’s not immediately noticeable, but it provided a little extra difference in the colouring of the sound.

The piano has a little bit of an Amy Winehouse sound – it’s a little bit rough, and very, very intense. And this is what I wanted to achieve from this music. It really fits like a glove. When I arrived in the studio I asked someone to play it and I walked around the piano to hear in which place the sound was closest to what I wanted. In the end we had an interesting mix, with one of the microphones placed really close to the strings so that it picked up the almost tactile connection of the hammer of the string. When starting to listen back I was at first shocked a little, because it’s a very unexpected sound. It doesn’t exactly sound like a piano, but you cannot say it sounds like a harpsichord either, or anything else really – it’s a fantasy sound. But then you get into the atmosphere. I’m always looking – particularly when I’m recording, because you can only really do it in recording – for a particular instrument that would specifically fit the composer. And I think this particular set-up worked well for Louis Couperin.”

Pavel Kolesnikov's Louis Couperin recording is reviewed on page 84

Saariaho wins Contemporary prize

Kaija Saariaho has been named the recipient of the Contemporary Music category in the BBVA Foundation Frontiers of Knowledge Award, worth €400,000. The jury collectively praised the Finnish composer’s ‘contribution to contemporary music that is extraordinary in its individuality, breadth and scope’ and ‘seamless interweaving of the worlds of acoustic music and technology’.

British Museum hosts arts festival

From April 16 to 19, the British Museum hosts its first music festival, during which works by the likes of Ligeti and Liszt will feature alongside historic music from countries including China, India and Japan. Entitled ‘Europe and the World: A Symphony of Cultures’, it will ‘strive to allow a dialogue between works of classical and contemporary music and the British Museum’s extraordinary objects from all over the world.’

QEH and Purcell Room to reopen

At London’s Southbank Centre, the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Purcell Room are reopening after two years of refurbishment. Significant examples of Brutalist architecture, the two halls will relaunch with a programme that pays tribute to their 50-year history, featuring many artists to have performed over that time, as well as offering 32 premieres and new commissions.

BBC Young Musician kicks off

April will see the broadcast of the 2018 BBC Young Musician category finals. The competition culminates in the concerto final in Birmingham on May 13 – look out for broadcast details nearer the time. It’s the 40th anniversary of the competition, which has launched many careers (not least cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason’s, winner in 2016); part of the celebrations will include a special BBC Young Musician Prom.

FROM WHERE I SIT

Opera is not a museum culture but a bold art form that needs to evolve, says Edward Seckerson



The dramatic and somewhat predictably mixed reaction to Barrie Kosky's staging of Bizet's *Carmen* at the Royal Opera House recently (a show first seen in Frankfurt in 2016) once again raised questions as to how far opera has come and where it might be going as a living, breathing, theatrical art form. The DVDs reviewed regularly in these pages enshrine a phantasmagorical assortment of creative takes on mostly established classics of the operatic stage. More often than not the focus of rediscovery is on a relatively small core repertoire. Some of these rediscoveries push the envelope wilfully, some hardly bear scrutiny, others make one think differently about a piece, illuminating aspects of it that other productions simply don't or cannot reach. But most merit at least one viewing and a few basic questions. Why did the director make this choice? What is it saying? Does it ultimately serve the narrative and dramatic elements of the piece?

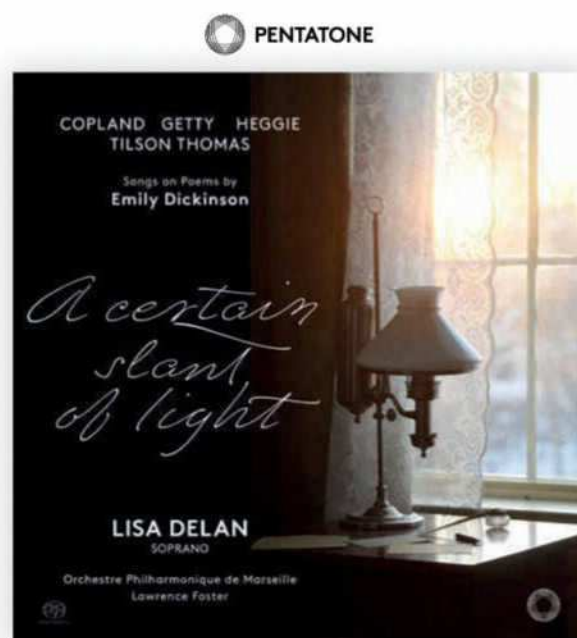
I have been attending opera long enough to remember the howls of derision that routinely greeted every production that dared to veer from tradition and period or did so in a way that stylised theatrical conventions. That still happens (and did, it seems, on the opening night of Kosky's *Carmen* – I attended the general dress), but what is more worrisome is that some opera-goers – and even accredited critics – have such a poor nose for theatre and so little imagination that you wonder why they venture into the opera house at all when they can visualise their own production while listening to their favourite recordings at home.

Opera is not a museum culture where singers once practised what one might call the taxidermic school of stage performance. It is a bold art form where musical and theatrical elements can achieve dramatic fission in extraordinary ways. Kosky's *Carmen* – which I thought stunning, by the way – does a whole lot more than that, and whilst this is *not* a review I do want to uphold its integrity and theatrical brilliance in the face of its naysayers.

Taking the critical edition of the score as their basis, Kosky and his team have essentially reimagined *Carmen* for today's sophisticated theatre audience. Abandoning the creaky dialogue (which even the best singing actors find hard to negotiate convincingly), along with the (even worse) sung recitative that isn't even Bizet's, they have fashioned a husky, sexy Carmen-like voiceover from the stage directions and character backstories of Bizet's librettists and Prosper Mérimée's original novella and used some of the additional, rarely heard, music as underscoring. They have further alluded to the Frenchness of the piece by emulating boulevard cabaret, and extensively underlined its Spanishness through dance. Such allusions are not just integral to the character of the piece but an added dimension to the staging of it and if the breathtaking precariousness of the staircase on which the drama unfolds isn't heartstopping in itself, Carmen's arrival at the bullfight which is her destiny in black traditional flamenco dress, trailing what is at once a stage-filling train and shroud, is an image never to be forgotten.

So what's not to like, you might ask? Don't ask me. **G**

PHOTOGRAPHY: EVA VERMANDEL



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Songs on Poems by Emily Dickinson

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A tale of TWO CITIES

James Jolly reports from Edinburgh and Berlin as the conductor Robin Ticciati prepares to bid farewell to the Scottish Chamber Orchestra and embrace the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin

Hans Scharoun's Philharmonie, which opened its doors in 1963 to Berlin's music lovers, remains one of the architectural wonders of the musical world. It's a building that sits alongside Jørn Utzon's Sydney Opera House in its timeless originality, and, with its so-called vineyard seating arrangement, it ushered in a style of auditorium design that has been imitated the world over. It's a hall that has witnessed plenty of changes during its half century: when built it was surprisingly close to the Berlin Wall; now it sits proudly at the centre of this capital city in a unified Germany. And musically, it has seen the transition at the Philharmoniker from the Karajan era, via Abbado and Rattle, to the dawn of a new age entrusted to one of music's least-known entities, Kirill Petrenko. But the Philharmonie also hosts the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, and this ensemble, too, has undergone many changes during its 72-year history.

Founded in 1946 as the RIAS (Radio In the American Sector) Symphony Orchestra, it was immediately put on the map by its hugely talented first Music Director, Ferenc Fricsay. When he succumbed to cancer in 1963 at the tragically early age of 48, the baton passed to a 34-year-old Lorin Maazel who proved an inspirational musical boss, as a handful of glorious recordings for DG bear witness. (Berlin in the early 1960s, as the Wall went up, must have shone like a cultural beacon for classical music in those dark days.) The DSO (its name since 1993) has proved an extraordinary launch pad for some of today's greatest conductors: Riccardo Chailly leapt straight to Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw, Kent Nagano to the Montreal Symphony Orchestra (and the Bavarian State Opera), and the latest incumbent, Tugan Sokhiev, now presides in Toulouse (as well as heading up the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow).

It's quite a heritage and one that the British conductor Robin Ticciati has joined as the DSO's new Music Director, a post he took up last autumn after nine years at the helm of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (with whom this month's set of the four Brahms symphonies was made – 'There's no other ensemble I would rather have done this with' Ticciati is quick to emphasise). So, for him – for this season at least – it's a tale of two cities, Janus-like looking back to his closing concerts in Scotland, and ahead to a new life in this most vibrant of Germany cities, where significantly he has also chosen to make his home.

Ticciati, at 34, already has an impressive CV. Though without formal training as a conductor, he cites both Sir Simon



Recording Brahms with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in Edinburgh's Usher Hall, May 2017

Rattle (now in his final lap at Berlin's mighty Philharmoniker) and Sir Colin Davis as inspirational influences. He was the youngest conductor to appear at La Scala, Milan (standing in for an indisposed Riccardo Muti – 'I have this awful feeling that I turned up to my first rehearsal there wearing flip-flops!' he confesses with a mixture of horror and amusement – before returning to conduct a triumphant *Peter Grimes*). He has worked at New York's Metropolitan Opera (*Eugene Onegin* with Netrebko, Dolgov and Mattei) and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, and, since the start of 2014, he has been Glyndebourne's Music Director. Symphonically, as well as being the SCO's Principal Conductor, he has served as Chief Conductor of Sweden's Gävle Symphony Orchestra and Principal Guest of the Bamberg Symphony Orchestra.

To talk to, Ticciati is thoughtful and measured, with, for an interview such as this, an alarming habit of veering off on

a tangent (though always done with exquisite politeness, as he parks one thought to be returned to in due course). And he offers – just as there surely needs to be with any conductor – a reassuring balance of head and heart, of intellect and emotion. As we chatted after the rehearsal for Brahms's Third, Ticciati talked enthusiastically about the 'historic sublime', that awed-by-nature movement that so energised John Ruskin, but with the next breath, he was admitting to feeling 'that I was going to break down' when he engaged with the potency of the symphony's finale and its emotion-laden significance: 'Robert Schumann's Rhenish motif, a farewell to Clara, the fact that from Robert's death onwards

she only wore black as well as things like Brahms saying "You're the only person I've ever loved", and then there's Joachim and Brahms's own motif. In that last chorale all that comes together. I can talk about things like that with the SCO but just now I couldn't – I felt that words are pointless. It is *all* in the music.'

I spoke to Ticciati in the Scottish capital last May during the Brahms sessions for Linn (surely one of the only times all four symphonies have been recorded in a single set of unbroken sessions) as the temperature soared to 28 degrees, and then caught up with him in a considerably cooler Berlin this February as he rehearsed in the Philharmonie for a characteristically intriguing programme of Magnus Lindberg's *Chorale*, Alban Berg's *Seven Early Songs* and Bruckner's Sixth Symphony (a work that Linn was recording live over the two concerts). I wanted to learn how this young conductor sees his role in the musical life of a city where orchestras positively thrive.

'My response when I arrived here', he revealed backstage at the Philharmonie, 'was to look at the past 10 years of programmes and ask myself what they had perhaps been missing out on. And then you think of all those orchestras in Berlin and their individual identities ... But it's also about how to excite an audience with combinations of pieces, and what I love about the DSO is that they are a daring, programmatic orchestra. At the moment, I'm not so obsessed by the idea of "keeping"; I'm more interested about what I'm going to create. So, I'm not putting pressure on myself to come up with the next great idea. I'm just seeing what repertoire holes there are, what repertoire the orchestra and I can move quickly with, and develop something fast. And, ultimately, what's going to make the audience say, "I've got to hear that", or, "What is that going to sound like?" or "Why are they doing that? Why?". But I don't have some Grand Plan ... well, just some mini-Grand Plans! It feels very, very organic and the reason for that is the orchestra's



history – the programming from Kent, the programming from Ingo Metzmacher, and then the sound culture with Ashkenazy and Chailly. A lot has gone on with this orchestra. And I'm realising that more and more. They've done so much. There's such depth and history.'

Leafing through the DSO's 2017-18 brochure, my eye is caught by a concert that combines Roy Harris's Third Symphony, Schoenberg's Piano Concerto and Sibelius's Seventh. Ticciati laughs. 'I'm glad that one leapt out! The premise behind my first season was a mosaic. If you don't know an orchestra so well – and our history is four weeks of work together – you don't immediately want to pick a composer and go into him in depth, as I did in Scotland. Rather, I felt I wanted to go from Rebel to Larcher, and everything in between that I respond to. In a sense, I wanted to make every programme feel like a project and something that "pops" for the audience. Sibelius Seven I've lived with for a long time – that goes back to my teens and Colin Davis. But how do I bring that piece to a German radio orchestra? So, it made me think about symphonies in one movement and that somehow led to the Harris and *bis* relationship with European culture – he was fascinated by it and you hear it in his own American way. And I'm so moved by it. And I thought the Schoenberg in the middle would be a kind of squeeze of lemon juice!'

'If you're ready to disrobe artistically – to give yourself to art and creativity – the city of Berlin will come with you'

Watching Ticciati rehearse Bruckner's Sixth – without a score – was to be confronted again by many of the mysteries of the conductor's art and craft, but also how the dynamic between podium and musicians continues to evolve. 'The first couple of weeks here I really tried to speak only in German and I thought, "This is the way". Then, suddenly, the relationship musically was developing so fast and I was wanting to convey so much more, that the vocab, the single image, just wasn't there, so actually at the moment I'm annoyed with myself but I'm also laughing at myself because I'm speaking in English to them. But then their English is very good. They respond really well. They want to know what the conductor feels about the music.' Even so, a good 60 per cent of that rehearsal in question actually took place in German.

A word Ticciati uses often to describe the developing relationship with the DSO is 'refining': 'And it's lovely to be part of that process. It's about refining technique, even how you speak. If you're completely in control of the rehearsal process, you can take five minutes to say something. It's just a question of showing the orchestra that you know and are completely in control of the vision of the piece – musically, technically, the whole thing!'

And Berlin as a place to work? 'I've got to be careful that I don't project my own excitement on to it, but I still think it's a valid thing that in this city if you're ready to disrobe artistically – be ready literally to give yourself to art and creativity – the city will come with you. I know that's such a romantic thing to say, but you feel music is respected as part of the city's fabric. In my first week, we did that concert of Larcher and Rebel, a crazy programme that the orchestra were just eating up, that they were challenged and excited by. They want to be pushed – they want to eat and drink music and I feel they'll go anywhere. But the day before, I did a symphonic mob

PHOTOGRAPHY: MARCO BORGREVE



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Rehearsing Berg's *Seven Early Songs* with mezzo Karen Cargill and the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin in the Philharmonie, February 2018

with, I think, about 900 musicians (25 flutes doing *Peer Gynt* – amateurs and my guys in the middle). We did some *Carmen* and Grieg and I felt this excitement from the community.'

And with the DSO there seems to be an engagement with music at an almost forensic level. 'I had this wonderful moment yesterday when we were doing the Berg *Seven Early Songs*,' Ticciati recalls. 'I had a long meeting with the cellos and basses about seating. And the second bassoon was just waiting there. I couldn't quite catch his eye but he carried on waiting there for 10 minutes, 20 minutes, incredibly patiently, and when we finally finished he came up to me. "I just want to check one of the words in the fourth song. I feel that there's a misprint and she's singing 'der' rather than 'den'." And we looked at the score and, yes, he was right. I just thought that was incredible, that level of involvement. And it's a song he's not even playing in! It made me so happy ...'

Recordings of the Brahms symphonies are hardly in short supply; considerably fewer than the Beethovenian or Brucknerian nine, they make a neat quartet with their variety, ambition and plentiful opportunities for conductors and orchestras to show their mettle. There is one card, however, that very few ensembles choose to play and that is to invoke the performances that the Meiningen Court Orchestra gave both under Brahms and particularly under Fritz Steinbach in the last 15 or so years of the 19th century. This small ensemble, which can trace its roots back to 1690, already had a formidable reputation when Brahms was introduced to it by Hans von Bülow who became its Music Director in 1880. He admired its high standards and entrusted it with the premiere of his Fourth Symphony in

'I feel that when I get to the top of the mountain with Brahms, he's there as well – he hasn't left you'

1885. When von Bülow moved to the Berlin Philharmonic, he was succeeded first by Richard Strauss, no less, and then by Steinbach who continued the Brahms tradition. But what is significant for us, all these years later, is the size of the Meiningen ensemble: it was built on a string contingent of 10 (first violins).8 (seconds).6 (violas).6 (cellos).4 (basses).

(To put that in context most symphony orchestras nowadays would perform Brahms with a line-up of something like 16-18.16.12.12.8.)

It was Sir Charles Mackerras who opened modern ears to this 'Meiningen' approach with

his Telarc cycle with the same orchestra, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, as Ticciati's recording – a set that *Gramophone* reviewed in October 1997. 'One of the things I said to the orchestra at the beginning of this project,' Ticciati is quick to stress, 'is, "We are doing it with this [reduced] size of orchestra but, look, let's not get carried away because Brahms was a man who got incredibly excited by seeing 10 double basses and 18 first violins." Obviously, you shouldn't break outside the palette but I just wanted them to be only in a chamber setting in their minds. So already in size of orchestra, the playing field is open and it's ultimately about taste and, with Brahms, you always return to this thing of, "If you are a good musician you will know". So, 10.8.6.6.4 is what we work with. It's essential you have that depth – there just seems to be this extra layer of burial in the soil, a darkness, a different kind of hue that also lets other instruments ring in a different way over the top.'

Ticciati is, it seems, less interested in strict adherence to some kind of Meiningen template and more interested in how he can achieve the sound that he hears in this music within these forces. 'I very much wanted to balance the violas as



a line of counterpoint. That it's not wool in the middle; it's thread. (You can enter this into Pseud's Corner!) Joachim said, "The true tone is the unvaried tone", which I think is a good basis, but I definitely don't go as far as Roger Norrington – I definitely don't even go as far as John Eliot Gardiner, but I do feel that the basic tone colour is one of open purity and then the absolute ornament is vibrato. Vibrato is an essential moment where something blossoms into an ultimate romanticism. And that's what's so hard sometimes to find in the symphonic tradition as we know it now, because a lot of instrumentalists are taught to vibrate in an even, constant way. Nikolaus Harnoncourt says this incredible thing: "Alles was immer ist, ist nie" – "Everything that is always, is never". It's just a perfume, a moment – and then you get into a 19th-century colour. Portamenti (left hand), bow speed (right) and general chamber sound – that was the basis. It sounds like a recipe but I also hope I'm not someone reading from a recipe.'

One of the characteristics of the approach of the Meiningen orchestra's director Fritz Steinbach was considerable freedom of expression. Ticciati is wary: 'One of the criticisms of the time from Brahms's detractors was that this was just enlarged chamber music: these weren't proper symphonies. So, my premise is to return to just that: enlarged chamber music where you feel that there is this potential symphonic world able to reach the top dynamic of what you would want, but it's all done with players breathing with each other and with me. I talk a lot about elasticity, of ebb and flow and the idea of rushing. Yes, we *can* rush – the half beat *does* get faster when we get excited. We can shoot forward. On practical levels I talk a lot to the strings about portamenti and a type of legato fingering where our basic *espressivo* comes from right-arm bow control and left-hand legato. Take Brahms's falling thirds and sixths – I don't want my 10 violinists to go "Tee-Um" [with a marked slide between the two notes] or "Tee. Um". I want to hear the route between the two notes, so we've been working a lot on different fingerings to get the true sense of legato. I was influenced a lot, positively and negatively, from Mengelberg and, I feel, from Mahler. Steinbach impinges a lot – not so much about fingerings but there's an awful lot about articulation. And tempo.'

PHOTOGRAPHY: MARCO BORGREVE

When we parted in Edinburgh last May, Ticciati had the Brahms Fourth Symphony to record. 'I still look out into the middle distance with it. I have to avoid speaking of it as his last, knowing that there might have been a fifth – he burnt manuscripts of a fifth – and that opens up this whole new vista when you tackle the Fourth (like Mozart's Nos 39, 40 and 41, it gets that status as a last statement but they're just moments). With No 4, there's a moment of emotional truth and compositional rigour. What I've been totally obsessed with over the past few months is Brahms's chamber music, the Third Piano Sonata and the Opp 117, 118 and 119 piano pieces – the way that Radu Lupu might play a phrase in the sonata or how Christian Tetzlaff and Lars Vogt might do something in a violin sonata – I feel that intimacy and spontaneity must be in the symphonic music.'

Those thoughts were in my mind as I returned to speak to Ticciati in Berlin, but he pre-empted me ... 'Since I saw you I went to a trio concert with Christian, Tanya [Tetzlaff] and Lars last Saturday doing the Brahms C major – which I didn't know. And I thought about what has changed over those seven months. Just to see them play that piece, the Schumann F major and the Dvořák *Dumky* ... they inspired me so much. They've refined this 19th-century modern style. Ultimate contact – it ceases to be about instrumental perfection or showing us the score, it's just the music. And who knows how my Brahms might have changed had I known the middle part of the second movement where there are just these tiniest utterances – they're tiny, and yet they mean so much.' And that absorption prompts Ticciati to thought – so much to discover, so much to learn – and his natural modesty once again exerts itself. 'My journey with Beethoven has a long way to go, and of course the same could be said of my journey with Brahms. But at this moment in time, I feel that when I get to the top of the mountain with Brahms, he's there as well. Even at the end of the Fourth Symphony, which is a feeling of total despair, he still hasn't left you.'

► Andrew Farach-Colton reviews Robin Ticciati's Brahms cycle on page 55

ON RECORD: A TICCIATI TRIO

Three Gramophone Editor's Choice recordings



Berlioz

Les nuits d'été. La mort de Cléopâtre
Karen Cargill; SCO
Linn (6/13)

'One of the striking facets of Ticciati's conducting and the SCO's playing in *Les nuits d'été* is the clarity and detail that spring from the score. This is not effected in any obtrusive, mannered way but rather it is an indication of Ticciati's insight into Berlioz's subtle touches of colour and textural variety.'



Britten

Peter Grimes
La Scala, Milan
Opus Arte (7/13)
'In the pit, Robin Ticciati's conducting

and musical interpretation closely back what Jones and Fahie and designer Stewart Laing are doing. Ticciati eschews the weighty, rather Germanic approach of older conductors, concentrating on rhythmic and instrumental subtleties and the sheer reason why the music is like it is.'



Tchaikovsky

Eugene Onegin
Royal Opera
Opus Arte (12/13)

'The orchestra play outstandingly for Robin Ticciati, Glyndebourne's MD-elect. This is not the big, epic symphonic *Onegin* of Russian tradition but a most attentive use of Tchaikovsky's subtle dynamics and orchestral colours.'

STANDING UP TO HAYDN

Tapping into the humour and structural complexities of Haydn's sonatas has been daunting for pianist **Paul Lewis**, but performing them in concert has finally convinced him to begin a longterm recording project of this irrepressible music, writes **Hugo Shirley**



A waiting the arrival of Paul Lewis in the room at the back of Berlin's Teldex Studios on a freezing January morning, I'm struck by how quiet it is – almost unsettlingly so. When he appears, he offers a warm greeting before helping himself to a coffee. As we take our seats to start chatting, he radiates a certain relaxation – the main part of the recording is behind him; topping, tailing and listening back is all that's left to be done.

In conversation Lewis, now 45, is considered and eloquent, picking words carefully; his answers to questions are efficient rather than expansive. He's happy, I realise as I listen back to the recording, to let me waffle on myself. Lewis, one soon realises, is also an interested, engaged listener. In the background of the recording, though, I hear the occasional tapping out of rhythms: there's always, it seems, music somewhere in there, itching to get out.

The pianist's newest recording project for Harmonia Mundi, he tells me, sets out to capture music that he first consumed as a young boy: his local library was well stocked with Haydn, and specifically Alfred Brendel's early recordings of the sonatas. The first disc of Lewis's own more modest survey of the sonatas is out this month; the current plan is for two more. 'Let's see how it goes. Three, I think, would be a good start. I have no ambition to do all of them [there are more than 60 in total],' he says with one of the hearty laughs that pepper our hour-long discussion.

'For years I'd been thinking about doing a Haydn sonata series, a concert series, and I thought, "I can't do them all". It's different, he says, from Beethoven, whose 32 sonatas he has performed many times in concert and has also recorded, in a series whose volumes hungrily gathered up a clutch of Editor's Choices, Discs of the Month and, for Volume 4, *Gramophone's* Recording of the Year in 2008. 'There's a structure to them, but with Haydn it seems less clear what's what.'

The answer was to focus on certain pieces, but that didn't necessarily solve the problem of how best to present them in concert. 'Then I came up with this idea of combining them with other things, with Beethoven and Brahms.' That combination forms the basis of Lewis's current concert tour, running until 2019. Late Brahms and Beethoven – the former's Piano Pieces Opp 118 and 119; the latter's Bagatelles and *Diabelli* Variations – juxtaposed with a selection of Haydn sonatas. 'And then I thought, "Why not record them!"'

The pianist's own history with Haydn is one that inevitably brings us back to Brendel. Brendel taught Lewis, and could regularly have a Royal Festival Hall audience if not exactly rolling in the aisles, then certainly appreciating the composer's irrepressible wit. Lewis remembers his own reaction to the music, the sonatas and the symphonies, as a young boy. He had no problem connecting with it in a direct way, he tells me. 'But I think I probably got it in an eight-year-old's sort of way. It's very direct, and there are things that I probably understood more easily than I do now – things feel far more complicated.'

Brendel's influence was felt on many levels, especially since, as Lewis recalls, it was with Haydn that their personal engagement began. 'Haydn was the first thing

I played to him. I was a student at Guildhall and he came to give a masterclass. I was 20 at the time and I played the big E-flat Sonata, the last one. I remember him commenting that he thought the humour could come out a bit more,' he adds with another laugh. Brendel nevertheless invited him to keep in touch.

I ask more about what that Haydnesque humour actually is. 'It's understanding the humour, and how Haydn sets up expectations and then does something different, that makes you laugh.' And what about the delivery? Brendel's, I note, was always rather deadpan. 'I think it's quite good like that. It doesn't work if you find it *too* funny.'

He goes on to draw the comparison with a good stand-up, and I wonder whether recording this music, then, is like a comedian performing in an empty room. 'It's a different challenge,' he admits, 'and also it obviously sounds different when you listen back. In a performance you have your gestures to add to the delivery; in a recording you don't, and certain things have to be made even clearer: colours, timing ... I think the analogy is more like the difference between the way you would say something and the way you would write something.'

'I was listening to old recordings of me playing Schnittke and Shostakovich and thinking, "Jeez! Did I really play all that stuff?"'

There's also a major difference between programming for a recording and the way in which Lewis plans his concert programmes. And humour – its presence or absence – played a role in Lewis's decision to juxtapose Haydn and Brahms. 'The main reason I came up with Brahms as a contrast to Haydn is precisely that: it's a huge contrast. Whereas Haydn's so full of humour and surprises, I haven't been able to detect a grain of humour in Brahms, apart from maybe sort of good humour, like in the third piece of Op 119.'

Brahms was the subject of Lewis's last interview in these pages, discussing the score of the composer's First Piano Concerto, which he recorded with the Op 10 Ballades. I remind him of a different interview from a couple of years back when he'd announced that he'd tackle the Second Concerto in 2017. There's a mild expletive and a laugh before he admits that *was* the case, but that he's still waiting to feel entirely ready to present this vast piece in public. 'I've sort of learned it, more or less, but then to get it on the stage ... I think the older you get, the longer things take.'

This brings us on to a period in Lewis's career when more overtly virtuosic works – though not even then that Brahmsian behemoth – were staples of his repertoire. He tells me he has recently been listening again to some old BBC recordings of his of repertoire that people these days might not necessarily associate with him. 'Shostakovich's First Concerto, the Schnittke Piano and Strings: I was listening to it and thinking, "Jeez! Did I actually play all that stuff?" But sometimes I get something like Rachmaninov Three out and just



'A thoughtful, self-reflexive, philosophical attitude to his craft': Paul Lewis, pictured here at the Royal Festival Hall, has recorded the first of a projected three Haydn discs

play it through and wonder if I want to play it again or not. You can get excited about it, and think, "This would be great fun". But then you think, "Nah!"

I wonder, though, if he's concerned that people will start to assume that his repertoire is the same as Brendel's, which, at least in his later recordings, was famously restricted to works in and around the central Austro-German tradition.

And what did Brendel have to say about Lewis playing Rach Three? There's another laugh. 'I remember telling him about it, because I was playing it

quite a bit around the time I started with him. I think he said something like' – he dusts off what's clearly a well-practised impression – "Uuuuh, that is not necessary".'

He recalls, however, another revealing exchange: 'One time in the late '90s, I was playing a BBC Wigmore Hall lunchtime concert and the programme was the *Moonlight* Sonata, three late Liszt pieces and Prokofiev's Seventh Sonata. When I got home there was a message from Alfred on the answer machine to call him. I thought he'd give me lots of notes about the Beethoven and the Liszt. But he didn't say anything about those and wanted to talk about the Prokofiev. He had the music up on the piano, probably with the phone like that' – he mimes holding a phone to the ear with his shoulder – 'and was playing bits of the slow movement. He has such a curious mind for all sorts of music.'

The subject of this broader, more overtly virtuosic repertoire takes us into an interesting excursion where we address the technical differences between such music and, say, Schubert,

'It's really important to keep in touch with the widest range of music you can ... if it doesn't make it to the stage, then fine'

Beethoven or Haydn. 'A totally different skill set: it's like doing a different job altogether.' Lewis goes on: 'With Rachmaninov and this hardcore virtuosic stuff, it's more about stamina in the end. You wonder at how some composers write into the music this sense of struggle, this feeling of really having to commit 120 per cent physically.'

He cites Clifford Curzon's live 1955 recording of Brahms's Second Concerto with Hans Knappertsbusch and the Vienna Philharmonic. 'It's electrifying, but there have to be more wrong notes

than right notes in it – really, I'm not exaggerating! It's just armfuls of wrong notes, memory lapses and God knows what else. But it's amazing! It's something you wouldn't want to do without, a really important recording.' But we agree that it's not, alas, an example that one would get away with trying to emulate these days.

Such a discussion emphasises Paul Lewis's thoughtful, self-reflexive and even philosophical attitude to his craft, and he underlines again the importance of maintaining broad musical curiosity. 'I think it's really important to keep in touch with the widest range of music you can, to learn it and study it. And if it doesn't make it to the stage, then fine, because you have to be 100 per cent convinced – if *you're* not, you're not going to convince anyone else. If people are paying to come and hear it, you really don't want to do a half-arsed set of Chopin nocturnes that you're finding your way through.'

Chopin, indeed, is a composer who is very much present in the pianist's mind, and who was also particularly significant for

another of Lewis's teachers, Ryszard Bakst (who taught Lewis at Chetham's School). One of Lewis's recent concert programmes juxtaposed Chopin waltzes with Weber's Piano Sonata No 2 – 'there's so much of the ballroom in that piece that Chopin waltzes went perfectly with it' – but Lewis is acutely aware of the difficulties the composer represents. 'It's fine, you can make it sound like a waltz, but to make it sound like a *Chopin* waltz ...' He recalls his lessons with Bakst, who recorded all the Chopin mazurkas – 'probably *the* most difficult pieces of Chopin to really get absolutely spot-on, stylistically. When he sat down and demonstrated, you could pick up that language straight away, but I just find it quite difficult to reach these days.'

Further plans for the future will, he hopes, incorporate more French music, Debussy specifically, but he's still thinking about how best to programme it. Another name that comes up is Scriabin: 'I used to be *addicted* to Scriabin when I was at school. I couldn't get enough of it.' There's also the established collaborations. He's been working with the tenor Mark Padmore for over a decade now (their *Winterreise* on Harmonia Mundi won a *Gramophone* Award in 2010), and it's a relationship, he says, that has reached a rewarding level of closeness and freedom: 'The more you know each other, the more spontaneous it becomes.' A new programme they're assembling will feature a composer who ignites more fiery enthusiasm: Hugo Wolf. 'Wolf! It's just staggering. It's like Mahler for the piano, and some songs are just so outrageously written for the instrument.'

It's been a decade and a half since Lewis last recorded chamber music with strings – Mozart piano quartets and Schubert's *Trout* Quintet with the Leopold String Trio for Hyperion. He still enjoys this sort of repertoire, but was particularly spoilt by the experience of playing at the Malboro Festival last summer. 'You rehearse and rehearse endlessly, and there's no pressure to play in a concert. And I felt that, after spending 32 hours on the Dvořák Quintet, you do end up somewhere different with it. It's really positive. Then I played it after that with another group, where it was put together in two hours, and to be honest I just felt I was back to square one.'

Pianophiles will be excited to hear that Lewis is continuing his duet partnership with Steven Osborne. Having recorded Schubert at the beginning of the decade, they are now heading into French repertoire for a tour planned for 2020. 'That's the most difficult collaborative playing of all,' Lewis admits. 'To share the same keyboard with another pianist. When you share that space with someone, the thing that you immediately notice is, "Where's my sound?" I'm either not controlling the pedals myself, or if I am I'm doing it with someone else in mind. It's really hard physically to feel that you can just relax and produce that sound, and that's what's most unsettling about it.'

For all the beguiling beauty of Lewis's own sound – and his cool, calm demeanour in conversation – this is clearly a pianist who relishes such challenges, who likes to unsettle himself and his audience. And, with his Haydn, clearly the aim is to persuade people to think again about a composer who is too often overlooked by concert promoters, and to hear him afresh through the prism of, in particular, the programmes that Lewis has devised. 'The nicest thing is to have an audience leave saying, "That's an amazing piece – I'm going to look it up and get to know it." That's exactly what you want people to go away with.'

The first volume of Paul Lewis's Haydn sonatas on Harmonia Mundi, featuring Sonatas Nos 32, 40, 49 and 50, is released on April 13 and will be reviewed in the next issue of Gramophone

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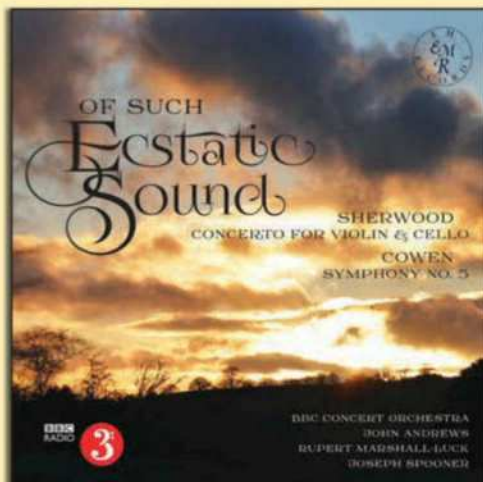
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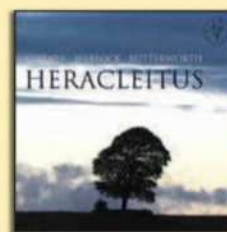
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GRAMOPHONE *Festival* GUIDE 2018

As winter gives way to warmer spells, classical music festival-goers in the UK, Europe and North America will find that they're spoilt for choice. Here's our annual guide, including several 'highlight events' not to be missed!

UK FESTIVALS

Aldeburgh Festival

June 8-24

The festival celebrates its 70th birthday this year and has a number of events linked to its launch year of 1948, along with an overarching festival theme of Britten and America, as well as the centenary of Leonard Bernstein. Artists-in-residence for 2018 include violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja, conductor John Wilson and flautist Claire Chase, each curating part of the programme. Highlights include the world premieres of Emily Howard's new opera *To See the Invisible*, and Colin Matthews's orchestration of Britten's *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo*. There is also an eight-choir Mass setting performed by Le Concert Spirituel and Hervé Niquet. Among other highlights, on the final weekend Bryn Terfel makes his festival debut.

snapemaltings.co.uk

Bampton Classical Opera

July 20-21, The Deanery Garden, Bampton

August 27, The Orangery Theatre,

Westonbirt School, Gloucestershire

September 18, St John's Smith

Square, London

Dedicated to breathing new life into little-known works of the Classical

period, and equally committed to relaxed, accessible opera at affordable prices, Bampton Classical Opera celebrates its 25th anniversary this year with Nicolo Isouard's 1810 *Cendrillon*, in a new English translation by festival founders Gilly French and Jeremy Gray, and directed by Gray.

bamptonopera.org

Bath Festival

May 11-27

Bath's major multi-arts festival this year celebrates its 70th anniversary across 17 days of concerts and events. Highlights include Lars Vogt performing all the Beethoven piano concertos with the Northern Sinfonia, Roderick Williams singing Schubert song cycles accompanied by Iain Burnside, a programme of piano works by Debussy, Schumann and Beethoven from Stephen Hough, and a Haydn programme from the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment conducted by John Butt including the *Nelson Mass*.

bathfestivals.org.uk

BBC Proms

July 13 - September 8

Full details of the BBC Proms season will be announced on April 19.

bbc.co.uk/proms

Beverley and East Riding

Early Music Festival

May 24-27

This festival, based in the Yorkshire market town of Beverley and organised by York's National Centre for Early Music, celebrates music from London to Venice and Vienna. Highlights include rising stars Il Quadro Animato, Lux Musicae London, and the University of York's 24. The National Centre for Early Music's youth ensemble The Minster Minstrels will also perform in Beverley for the first time. The festival also features opportunities for recorder players to hone their skills with Piers Adams.

ncem.co.uk/bemf

Brighton Festival

May 5-27

The UK's largest multi-arts festival is guest-directed this year by Brighton-based visual artist David Shrigley, and boasts an array of classical offerings. Highlights include Calixto Bieito's *The String Quartet's Guide to Sex and Anxiety*, featuring the Heath Quartet. There's also pianist Cédric Tiberghien and conductor Paul Kildea performing with the Chopin Project, and Ed Hughes's film, *Cuckmere: A Portrait* with its score played live

by The Orchestra of Sound and Light. The 50th anniversary of the Brighton Festival Choir is marked with two special performances of an immersive, overnight choral experience *The Voice Project - The Arms of Sleep*.

brightonfestival.org

Buckingham Summer Festival

July 7-14

This festival offers morning piano recitals, and lunchtime and evening concerts. This year is its 30th anniversary, and the programme includes performances of the Bach *Brandenburg Concertos*, and a concert from the Orchestra of Stowe Opera in Buckingham Parish Church, conducted by artistic director Robert Secret, featuring Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2 with soloist Craig Greene.

buckinghamsummerfestival.org

Bury St Edmunds Festival

May 18-27

Classical highlights include Bach's Mass in B minor from the Academy of Ancient Music and Tenebrae in St Edmundsbury Cathedral, an evening of wine tasting and Baroque music exploring from London to Vienna by Oz Clarke and The Armonico Consort & Baroque

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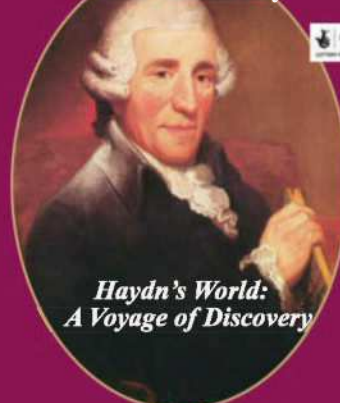
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Buxton International Festival

July 6-22

This Peak District festival offers an array of opera, music and literature. This year, the festival completes its trilogy of early Verdi titles with a production of *Alzira*, the Buxton Festival Chorus and the Northern Chamber Orchestra conducted by the festival's artistic director Stephen Barlow, and directed by the renowned Verdi specialist Elijah Moshinsky. The other opera for 2018 is Mozart's *Idomeneo*. buxtonfestival.co.uk

Cambridge Summer Music Festival

July 6-21

The CSMF, held in atmospheric venues throughout Cambridge, celebrates its 40th birthday this year, under the directorship of David Hill. Solo and chamber recitals include performances from pianist Joanna MacGregor, the Brodsky Quartet, and the Gould Piano Trio. Orchestral and choral works include, appropriately, Mozart's Symphony No 40, Fauré's Requiem and Bach's B minor Mass. New music highlights this year include the world premiere of a work by rising star Kate Whitley, co-commissioned with BBC Radio 3 to be broadcast across the UK. cambridgesummermusic.com

Carducci Festival Highnam

May 18-20

This annual weekend festival run by the Carducci Quartet takes place at Highnam, near Gloucester. Guest artists joining the quartet this year include pianist Danny Driver for Elgar's Piano Quintet - in a 'War and Humanity'-themed concert to also include Shostakovich's string Quartet No 8 - and cellist Benedict Kloecker for Schubert's Cello Quintet. carduccifestivalhighnam.co.uk

Cheltenham Music Festival

June 30 - July 8

This year's edition marks Meurig Bowen's last as director, and he's bowing out in style. The festival opens with a weekend of concerts in the Tithe Barn at Syde Manor from harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani who is joined by the Consone Quartet and mezzo Sarah Connolly. The Cheltenham Town Hall Proms feature Mark Elder with the Hallé, Maxim Vengerov, Martyn Brabbins with the BBC National Orchestra of Wales and Sheku Kanneh-Mason in Elgar's Cello Concerto and an all-Haydn programme from András Schiff with the Choir and Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment. New

works premiered include a retelling of *Hansel and Gretel* by Matthew Kaner and Simon Armitage; Colin Riley's *In Place* and a new chamber opera, *Juliana*, by Joseph Phibbs. cheltenhamfestivals.com/music

Festival of Chichester

June 16 - July 15

Headlining this year, as part of the International Piano lunchtime series at the Cathedral, are Stephen Kovacevich and Victor Ryabchikov. Also at the Cathedral, the Kosmos Ensemble link up with Worthing Symphony Orchestra for a new work by Errollyn Wallen. There's also chamber music, jazz and poetry. festivalofchichester.co.uk

Chipping Campden Music Festival

May 12-26

Taking place in Chipping Campden's St James's Church, this two-week festival presents programmes packed with the world's top performers. Highlights this year include an illustrated lecture from pianist Alfred Brendel on playing Mozart, prior to Paul Lewis performing three of the concertos across three concerts with the Festival Academy Orchestra directed by Thomas Hull. Chamber highlights meanwhile include Schubert and Brahms from the Nash Ensemble, a violin and piano recital from regular duo partners Alina Ibragimova and Cédric Tiberghien, plus piano recitals from Stephen Hough and Steven Osborne. campdenmusicfestival.co.uk

Corbridge Chamber Music Festival

August 3-5

This Northumberland festival, based at St Andrew's Church, Corbridge, is hosted and directed by the Gould Piano Trio and clarinettist Robert Plane, all of whom perform at this, the 20th year of the festival, with guests James Gilchrist, Adam Walker, Mia Cooper and David Adams. One anniversary highlight is a festival commission for a new clarinet and piano trio by Huw Watkins, who appears both as pianist and composer. The music of Brahms, Poulenc and Schumann also features, and visitors can get involved themselves with a Come and Sing Fauré Requiem. corbridgefestival.co.uk

Dorset Opera Festival

July 12-28

Set within 400 acres of Dorset countryside at Bryanston, this 45-year-old country-house opera festival runs a summer school for singers aged over 16 who wish to be in the chorus, followed by two large-scale productions with full orchestra and internationally known soloists, which this year are the British stage premiere of Massenet's

HIGHLIGHT EVENT

Dartington International Summer School

July 28 - August 25

Set on the medieval Dartington Estate in the heart of the Devon countryside, this four-week festival under the artistic directorship of pianist Joanna MacGregor, celebrates its 70th anniversary in 2018.

There are a multitude of workshops, masterclasses, coaching and concerts, premieres and new collaborations to be enjoyed, which feature pianists Imogen Cooper and Adrian Brendel, soprano Felicity Lott, the Heath Quartet, Trio Gaspard and folk duo Harbottle & Jonas, among a host of others. Choral projects range from Bolivian Masses to Haydn's *Creation* and Verdi's Requiem, while composers are represented by Eleanor Alberga, Oliver Knussen and Freya Waley-Cohen. dartington.org



Imogen Cooper performs at Dartington this year

Le Cid, and Puccini's *La bohème*. Worth noting is the festival's relaxed vibe, because whilst there's the *de rigueur* fine-picnicking, champagne bars, cream teas and five-course dinners, there's no dress code.

dorsetopera.com

Dunster Festival

May 25-27

This weekend-long Somerset festival is based in Dunster's Priory Church of St George, with performances from the Sacconi Quartet, the Marian Consort led by Rory McCleery, flautist Thomas Hancox, harpist Rachel Wick, and organist William Whitehead. The opening concert is a particular highlight, featuring chamber music by Ravel and Debussy. dunsterfestival.co.uk

East Neuk Festival

June 27 - July 1

Eighteenth-century music is at the heart of this year's Fife-based festival, with regular Christian Zacharias performing not only as keyboard soloist, but also conducting the Scottish Chamber Orchestra in a programme to include his own arrangement of Rameau's *Les Indes Galantes* Suite. There's also a Big Day of Bach which sees Jean-Guihen Queyras perform all Bach's cello suites in different venues. Other highlights include performances by the Tallis Scholars, resident ensemble the Elias Quartet, and the Castalian Quartet. eastneukfestival.com

Edinburgh International Festival

August 3-27

The Edinburgh International Festival - a global cultural celebration for people of all nations - invites some of the finest performers from the worlds of dance, opera, music and theatre to Scotland's capital. Classical music and opera

performances take place at the Festival Theatre, Usher and Queen's Halls. Highlights include Simon Rattle and the London Symphony Orchestra, Marin Alsop and the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, staged productions of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and *La Cenerentola* and, in the third instalment of the International Festival's four-year presentation of the *Ring* cycle, Mark Elder returns to Edinburgh with the Hallé Orchestra to give a concert performance of *Siegfried* with Simon O'Neill in the title-role.

eif.co.uk

English Haydn Festival

June 6-10

The 2018 Festival celebrates its 25th anniversary year with the theme of 'Haydn's World: A Voyage of Discovery'. The 18th century was an era of great innovations and discoveries in the fields of science, art and music, with Haydn's compositions reflecting inspired works by artists and scientists of his generation. Concert highlights include a grand opening concert conducted by Steven Devine and featuring trumpeter Crispian Steele-Perkins, and a performance of Haydn's *Creation*. englishhaydn.com

English Music Festival, Dorchester-on-Thames

May 25-28

The weekend opens in Dorchester Abbey with a concert featuring the UK premiere of Richard Blackford's Violin Concerto from soloist Rupert Marshall-Luck with John Andrews and the English Symphony Orchestra. They are joined by cellist Joseph Spooner for Delius's Double Concerto, before giving the world premiere of Christopher Wright's Symphony. Other highlights include a recital from tenor John Potter and lutenist Jacob Heringman, a semi-staged Dorchester Abbey

HIGHLIGHT EVENT

The Grange Festival

June 7 - July 8

This festival is back after its successful inaugural year, with the Bournemouth

Symphony Orchestra and the Academy of Ancient Music both continuing their residencies. New in 2018 is the presence of Wayne McGregor as

director of dance, as the Grange becomes the first country-house festival to make ballet and dance central to its programming; DANCE@THEGRANGE opens with contemporary dance by Company Wayne McGregor alongside iconic classical ballet pieces performed by The Royal Ballet's Edward Watson and others. There are three new operatic productions: Handel's *Agrippina*, Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* and Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, plus a concert staging of Bernstein's *Candide* for Bernstein 100.

thegrangefestival.co.uk



The country-house festival features dance in 2018

performance of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* from Armonico Consort under Christopher Monks, and an Ethel Smyth programme from contralto Lucy Stevens and pianist Elizabeth Marcus, before Camerata Wales and Owain Arwel Hughes bring the festival to a close.

englishmusicfestival.org.uk

Fishguard International Music Festival

July 24 - August 3

Set against the stunning backdrop of the Pembrokeshire coastline, this two-week festival takes place at venues ranging from the majesty of St Davids Cathedral to the intimacy of medieval parish churches. Visitors for 2018 include Chamber Choir Ireland, conducted by Paul Hillier, in a programme of contemporary music from Ireland and America. Then Mussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* receives two performances: the piano original, courtesy of Peter Donohoe, and Ravel's later transcription with the Welsh National Opera Orchestra.

fishguardmusicfestival.co.uk

Garsington Opera

May 31 - July 22

Based at the Wormsley Estate in the Chiltern Hills, Garsington this year presents four new productions: Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* from director Netia Jones making her Garsington debut, with Christian Curnyn who conducts the Garsington Orchestra and Chorus and a cast including Benjamin Hulett as Tamino, Jonathan McGovern as Papageno, Louise Alder as Pamina, and Írde Martínez as Queen of the Night. Artistic director Douglas Boyd then conducts Tim Albery's production of Strauss's *Capriccio*, with soprano Miah Persson as the Countess. The Philharmonia's 2018 appearance is for Verdi's *Falstaff*, Richard Farnes conducting Bruno Ravella's new

production. The Festival world premiere is David Sawer's *The Skating Rink*.

garsingtonopera.org

Glyndebourne

May 19 - August 26

Opening the festival is Glyndebourne's first-ever staging of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, in Annise Miskimmon's production, with Omer Meir Wellber conducting the LPO. There are two new productions this season: the first new version of Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* in almost 20 years, directed by Stefan Herheim who makes his Glyndebourne debut, with Robin Ticciati conducting. Then Olivier Award-winning director Keith Warner makes his much-anticipated Glyndebourne debut with Barber's *Vanessa*; Jakub Hrůša conducts a cast including Emma Bell and Virginie Verrez. Also on the 2018 programme are revivals of *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Giulio Cesare*.

glyndebourne.com

Grange Park Opera

7 June - 14 July

Under the artistic direction of Wasfi Kani, Grange Park Opera takes place in a new woodland theatre on the estate of the 15th-century Surrey manor house, West Horsley Place. This season opens with *Oklahoma!*, Richard Balcombe conducting the BBC Concert Orchestra in Jo Davies' production. It's then the Orchestra of English National Opera who Stephen Barlow conducts for Patrick Mason's version of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. The ENO Orchestra also plays, under the baton of Gianluca Marciano, for Stephen Medcalf's production of Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera*. Also on the bill for this year is the Novaya Opera Company with the world premiere of Konstantin Boyarsky's *Pushkin*.

grangeparkopera.co.uk

Gregynog Festival

June 18-30 & September

Wales's oldest extant classical music festival takes 'Borders' as the theme for this year's concerts, talks and exhibitions. The season celebrates Gregynog's Border location, and borders of many other kinds, both literal and metaphorical. Women feature prominently as composers and performers to mark 100 years since the Representation of the People Act 1918. Artistic director Dr Rhian Davies is the leading authority on the iconic Welsh musician Morfydd Owen who died three weeks short of her 27th birthday on September 7, 1918, and has also planned an additional sequence of special events in Wales and London for the month of Morfydd's centenary.

gregynogfestival.org

Harrogate International Festival

July 5-29, pre-festival day June 17

Classical, jazz, outdoor theatre, and family-friendly events are all covered by this North Yorkshire spa town's music festival, with a Young Musician Series complementing the main concerts. On June 17, there is a one-off pre-festival 1940s day featuring the John Wilson Orchestra, while July highlights include clarinettist Emma Johnson celebrating the centenary of Leonard Bernstein, and appearances by the Hallé Orchestra, violinist Rachel Podger and star vocal ensemble, VOCES8.

harrogateinternationalfestivals.com

Holt Festival

July 21-29

This North Norfolk Georgian town's festival hosts a mixture of music, literary events, drama, visual arts and family events, and this year it celebrates its 10th anniversary. Highlights include a two-piano recital from Gloria Campaner and Leszek Możdżer, whose programme includes music from centenary composer Debussy, Chopin and Lutosławski, all melded with jazz. Tenor James Gilchrist also appears, performing the songs of Dowland, Purcell and Britten accompanied by Matthew Wadsworth on lute and theorbo. Then, soprano Lisa Cassidy sings Poulenc's setting of Cocteau's play *La voix humaine*, accompanied by pianist William Ferguson, with actress Tracey Catchpole reading the text in English.

holtfestival.org

Holy Week Festival

March 26 - April 1

Back for 2018 after a hugely successful inaugural year, this partnership between St John's Smith Square and Tenebrae presents a mix of workshops, ticketed concerts and free late-night liturgical events exploring a vast

range of sacred music in celebration of Holy Week. Topping the liturgical list of highlights are Nigel Short and Tenebrae performing a free-entry sequence of devotional settings and responses, while concert highlights include Aurora Orchestra performing Pärt's *Passio*, and Gabrieli and Paul McCreesh with Bach's B minor Mass. There is also a Come and Sing Handel's *Messiah*.

sjss.org.uk; tenebrae-choir.com

Iford Arts

May 26 - August 4

Proof that the West Country can do country-house opera and picnics too, this festival is set in the Grade I listed Peto garden of Iford Manor, six miles outside Bath. Opera is staged in the round and sung in English for a seated audience of 90. There are informal promenade concerts, and seated cloister concerts. This season, Iford marks the Bernstein centenary with *Candide* as its opening production.

ifordarts.co.uk

JAM on the Marsh

July 5-15

The Kent-based festival sets the southeast coast ablaze with music, theatre and lots more. Opening the festival are VOCES8 and Canterbury Cathedral Girls' Choir; there's also a concert later on in the festival by the London Mozart Players. And don't miss the BBC Singers performing Rachmaninov's *Vespers*.

jamconcert.org

Lake District Summer Music International Festival

July 28 - August 10

A focus on 1918, marking the end of the First World War, incorporates a screening of the 1921 anti-war film, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*, to an improvised accompaniment. There are also concerts marking the death of Lili Boulanger and Hubert Parry, and the creation of Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Romania, Poland, Austria, Hungary and Finland as independent states. Michael Berkeley's 70th birthday is also celebrated. The featured instrument is the bassoon, and there's a study day 'In the footsteps of Beethoven'.

ldsm.org.uk

Lammermuir Festival

September 14-23

This East Lothian festival takes place in venues from historic houses and churches through to the Concorde Hangar at the National Museum of Flight. The 2018 edition, under the artistic direction of Hugh Macdonald and James Waters, includes a residency from composer and clarinettist Mark Simpson, the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, pianists Jason Rebello and Alisdair Hogarth, the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

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Image: Tony O'Malley (1913 - 2003) Rice Cornfield in the Woods oil on canvas (detail). Collection: Crawford Art Gallery, Cork.



Clockwise from top: Elina Vähälä, Quatuor Daniel, Annelien von Wauwe, Ella Van Poucke, Mark Padmore
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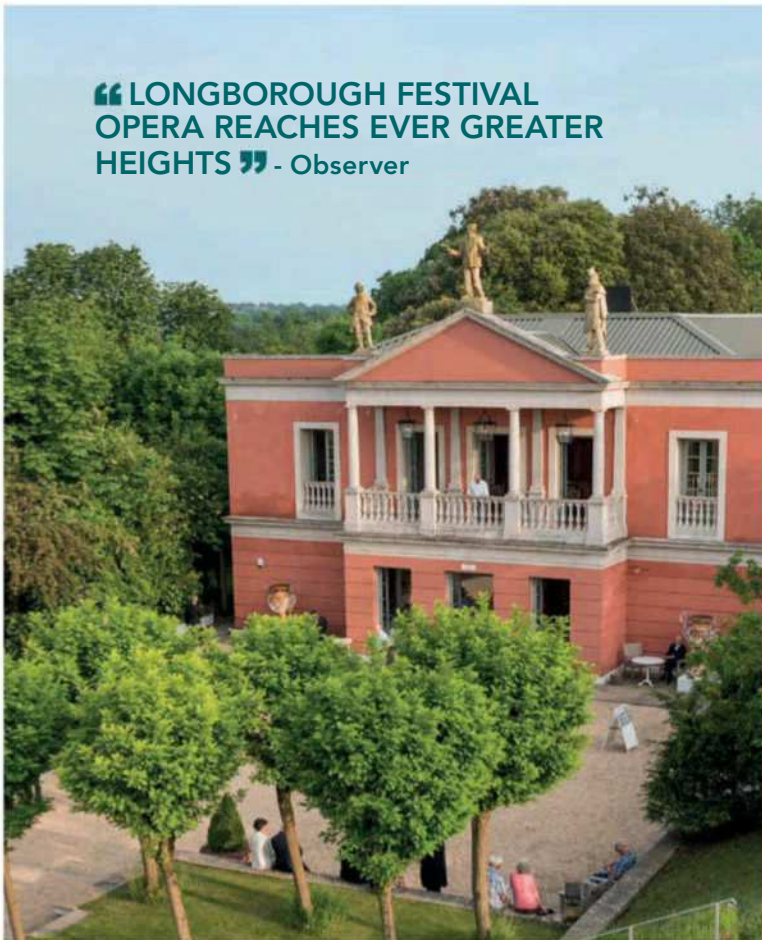
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Leeds Piano Festival

May 14-22

Taking place both in London and Leeds, this eight-day event is a new addition to the Leeds International Piano Competition, now under the directorship of Paul Lewis and Adam Gatehouse. Highlights of the inaugural festival include performances from winners and alumni of the competition, Lars Vogt, Alessio Bax and Sunwook Kim. Another key element will be performances from three young scholars from festival partner, the Lang Lang International Music Foundation, linked to a programme of outreach work in Leeds and London, the latter in collaboration with Wigmore Hall. leedsplano.com

London Festival of Baroque Music

May 11-19

Under the leadership of guest artistic director Sébastien Daucé, and hosted by venues including St John's Smith Square, St Peter's Eaton Square and St Alfege Greenwich, 2018's festival explores the French Baroque under the title, 'Treasures of the Grand Siècle'. Highlights among 22 events include Charpentier's *Te Deum* in Westminster Abbey, and the UK premiere of 'Le Concert Royal de la Nuit' with Sébastien Daucé's own group, Ensemble Correspondances, representing the event that saw Louis XIV emerge as the Sun King. There's also 'Paris-Madras', a collaboration between Indian classical musicians and French Baroque specialists, and 'Le Poème Harmonique', exploring the influence of the East on the French Court. lfbm.org.uk

London Handel Festival

March 17 - April 16

Venues beyond Handel's old parish church, St George's Hanover Square, include a new space, Grade II listed Fitzrovia Hospital Chapel, plus the Charterhouse, the Foundling Museum, and Handel & Hendrix in London. Opening the four weeks of music, walks and talks is a 300th-birthday performance of *Acis and Galatea* under LHF musical director Laurence Cummings, who also conducts the London Handel Orchestra in Bach's *St Matthew Passion*. Other highlights include Mr Handel's Scholars, which gathers together alumni of the Handel Singing Competition, plus the 2017 finalists Maria Ostroukhova and Nathan Vale. london-handel-festival.com

Longborough Festival Opera

June 6 - August 2

This country-house opera festival has an especially intimate feel, thanks to its 500-seat auditorium. It also has a special commitment to the music of Wagner. As such, 2018 opens with a new production from Thomas Guthrie of *Der Fliegende Holländer* conducted by the festival's music director, Wagner expert Anthony Negus. The other productions, all of which are new for the festival this year, are Daisy Evans's staging of Verdi's *La traviata* conducted by Thomas Blunt, Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and then for the Young Artist production, this year Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. lfo.org.uk

The Ludlow English Song Weekend

April 6-8

Under the artistic directorship of Iain Burnside this festival focuses on 20th- and 21st-century English song with recitals, choral music, masterclasses, poetry and talks. This year's theme is Ireland, with song settings by great Irish writers and poets such as James Joyce and Yeats, and with the music of Bax, Bridge, Warlock and Moeran featuring alongside Irish composers including Ina Boyle and Jennifer Walshe, and a new work from Belfast-born Philip Hammond. Singers include soprano Ailish Tynan and tenor Robin Tritschler; there's also a masterclass from Ann Murray. Instrumentalists include flautist Adam Walker, oboist Nicholas Daniel and the Gildas String Quartet. ludlowenglishsongweekend.com

Machynlleth Festival

August 19-26

This Welsh chamber music festival, under the artistic direction of pianist Julius Drake, includes three days of traditional Welsh music amid its classical programme. Highlights for 2018 include a mini-residency from Bulgarian pianist Plamena Mangova with cellist Frans Helmerson and violinist Mihaela Martin. Other collaborations worth catching include the Piatti String Quartet with viola player Rosemary Ventris and cellist Marcin Sieniawski for a programme featuring Debussy's String Quartet, and Drake himself accompanying mezzo Christine Rice for Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine*. moma.machynlleth.org.uk

Mendelssohn on Mull Festival

June 30 - July 7

Set on the Scottish isles of Mull and Iona, and on the mainland in Oban, this festival presents an annual commemoration of Mendelssohn's visit to Scotland. Details for 2018 weren't available as we went to press, so keep checking the website. mendelssohnonmull.com

HIGHLIGHT EVENT

Lichfield Festival

July 4-14

One of the most eclectic multi-arts festivals in the UK, Lichfield Festival this year takes

'Extraordinary Women' as its theme, celebrating the centenary of emancipation. Classical artists appearing in Lichfield Cathedral include the City of

Birmingham Symphony Orchestra with Edward Gardner, BBC National Orchestra of Wales, The Cardinal's Musick, and La Nuova Musica with soprano Lucy Crowe. There are six artists in residence, too: pianists Danny Driver and Joseph Atkins, the Carducci Quartet, clarinettist Matthew Hunt, violinist Joo Yeon Sir and singer Jessica Walker. They perform individually and collectively in repertoire from Haydn and Mozart through Elgar, Bernstein and Glass. Premieres meanwhile include works by Nico Muhly and featured composer Ninfia Cruttwell-Reade.

lichfieldfestival.org



The CBSO perform at Lichfield Cathedral this year

Malcolm Arnold Festival

October 13-14

The 13th Malcolm Arnold Festival, held at the Royal & Derngate in Northampton, features live music (including, this year, several world premieres), films and talks on this multi-faceted composer. malcolmarnoldfestival.com

Milton Abbey International Music Festival

July 30 - August 4

Hosted by vocal group VOCES8, the festival presents a week of performances in Dorset's 12th-century Milton Abbey, running in tandem with a musical summer school open to all. Highlights this year include Robert Hollingworth conducting VOCES8 and VOCES8 Scholars in a programme that includes Bach's *Actus Tragicus*. There's also a chance to hear *Guardian Angel*, the VOCES8 collaboration with Baroque violinist Rachel Podger. Andy Dickens and his jazz band are back too, and then the festival concludes by marking the Bernstein with Barnaby Smith conducting massed forces for Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*. miltonabbeyfestival.com

Music at Paxton Festival

July 13-22

This chamber music festival takes place in the intimate surroundings of the Picture Gallery at Paxton House, Berwick-upon-Tweed, in the Scottish Borders. This year marks 100 years since the end of the First World War, and Debussy's death, with performances including Alasdair Beatson and Friends playing Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, and Trio Apaches playing Ireland's Piano Trio No 2 and Beamish's arrangement of Debussy's *La mer*. Visiting artists include pianist Pascal Rogé, the

Scottish-based Maxwell Quartet who recently won the Trondheim International Chamber Music Competition, baritone Benjamin Appl, fortepianist Kristian Bezuidenhout, guitarist Sean Shibe and cellist Steven Isserlis. musicatpaxton.co.uk

Musicfest Aberystwyth Festival

July 28 - August 4

The spectacular coastline of Cardigan Bay in West Wales is a fine backdrop for an inspirational week for music-making. Aberystwyth Arts Centre's MusicFest is an enticing fusion of Summer School and Music Festival, so you can expect masterclasses with the likes of international clarinettist David Campbell alongside an intriguing programme of concerts and recitals, details of which are yet to be announced.

musicfestaberystwyth.org

Newbury Spring Festival

May 12-26

The Newbury Spring Festival turns 40 this year, celebrating with a mix of classical, musical theatre, folk, jazz and cabaret. The festival opens at St Nicolas Church with a newly commissioned work by Hannah Kendall, followed by a performance of Elgar's Cello Concerto played by Sheku Kanneh-Mason with the Philharmonia Orchestra and Edward Gardner. Other highlights include Ex-Cathedra with 40-part music from both Elizabethan Ages, and Solomon's Knot performing Bach's monumental Mass in B minor. Additional artists for 2018 include John Lill, Alina Ibragimova, John Tomlinson, Liyr Williams, the Bournemouth and Flanders symphony orchestras, and singers Elizabeth Watts and Natalie Clein. newburyspringfestival.org.uk

HIGHLIGHT EVENT

North York Moors Chamber Music Festival

August 12-25

'Music for a While' is the British-inspired theme for the 10th anniversary of this festival founded and directed by the cellist Jamie Walton. Eleven concerts explore as many churches dotted throughout the National Park and along the coast, presenting in particular some of the darker, more



Adès's chamber music features in 2018

subversive British repertoire of the past century. Highlights include Walton's *Façade*, and song cycles by Elgar, Britten and George Benjamin with mezzo-soprano Anna Huntley. Newer music highlights include a new commission, a theorbo concerto by Stephen Goss performed by Matthew Wadsworth, and the chamber music of Thomas Adès. Artists taking up their usual two-week residency include Katya Apekisheva, Simon Blendis, Roman Mints and the Oculi Ensemble.

northyorkmoorsfestival.com

Norfolk and Norwich Festival

May 11-27

This multi-arts festival is probably the oldest in the UK, tracing its history back to 1772. There are two major classical events this year: the first, in St Andrew's Hall, sees the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra perform Mahler's Symphony No 5 under the baton of Robert Trevino, plus Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No 2 with soloist Arseny Tarasevich-Nikolaev. For the second, in Norwich Theatre Royal, Thomas Adès conducts the Britten Sinfonia in Beethoven's Symphonies Nos 4 and 5, plus a Beethoven piano concerto with Nicolas Hodges.

nnfestival.org.uk

North Norfolk Festival

August 13-24

Highlights for 2018 include Melvyn Tan performing Beethoven and Schubert piano sonatas, a song cycle from soprano Lisa Milne accompanied by Tim Horton, guitarist Sean Shibe making his festival debut with a programme ranging from early Scottish lute music to Villa-Lobos, and the Doric Quartet with pianist Alasdair Beatson to include piano quintets by Thomas Adès and Dvořák.

northnorfolkmusicfestival.com

Occupy the Pianos

April 20-22

Hosted by St John's Smith Square, Rolf Hind's iconoclastic new festival returns with a dual focus on political protest and inner spirituality. The 2018 edition will present some vivid and theatrical modern classics: Rzewski's *Coming Together*, Kagel's *Staatstheater* (with amateur musicians from CoMa) and *Miss Donnithorne's Maggot* by Peter Maxwell Davies, as well as Rolf Hind's own *Way Out East* for saxophone, singer, piano and percussion, receiving its first British performance.

sjss.org.uk

Opera Holland Park

May 29 - July 28

OHP's season starts with Verdi's *La traviata*; Matthew Kofi Waldren conducts a cast headed by Lauren Fagan as Violetta. There's also a new production from Oliver Platt of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, featuring Eleanor Dennis making her OHP debut, as well as Peter Coleman-Wright, Sarah Tynan, Kitty Whately and Nicholas Lester. OHP also stages its first Strauss opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos*. The final opera is Mascagni's *Isabeau* with Anne Sophie Duprels in the title-role. Completing the season are showcase performances from The Royal Ballet School.

operahollandpark.com

The Oxford Lieder Festival

October 12-27

Themed 'The Grand Tour: A European Journey in Song', this year's festival aims to place the familiar masterpieces of song and poetry within the wider context of a traversal of Europe, while also celebrating the major anniversaries of Debussy, Gounod and Hubert Parry. Leading British singers among the visiting artists are Louise Alder, James Gilchrist and Carolyn Sampson, while international names include Véronique Gens, Christoph Prégardien and Camilla Tilling.

oxfordlieder.co.uk

Oxford May Music

May 3-7

This festival combines music and science, under the artistic directorship of violinist Jack Liebeck and administration of particle physicist Professor Brian Foster. Visiting artists include violinist Alexander Sitkovetsky, soprano Ailish Tynan, guitarist Craig Ogden, clarinettist Julian Bliss and pianist Danny Driver. Themes include the rise and fall of Romanticism, with works by Brahms, Strauss, Mahler and Schoenberg. The finale focuses on Austria, with Korngold's Piano

Quintet, Mozart's C major Piano Trio K458 and the String Sextet No 1 of adopted Viennese, Brahms. Lectures range from Professor Frank Close on scientific spies, MI5 and music around Oxford, to Professor David Owen on the body's 'white van' cellular delivery network.

Florilegium also return for the traditional Sunday Baroque concert.

oxfordmaymusic.co.uk

Oxford Piano Festival and Summer Academy

July 28 - August 5

The Festival combines a concert series in some of the most beautiful buildings in Oxford with a daily programme of public masterclasses. Festival patron Alfred Brendel opens the festival offering insights into performing Mozart's keyboard works, ahead of Piotr Anderszewski playing Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*. Festival president Andrés Schiff concludes with Book II of Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier*.

oxfordphil.com

Perth Festival of the Arts

May 17-26

Classical highlights for this, one of the oldest continuously running arts festivals in Scotland, is the festival's closing concert from the Dresden Philharmonic, which celebrates its 150th birthday year. Under the directorship of Michael Sanderling they will perform the Bruch Violin Concerto with soloist Jennifer Pike, plus Shostakovich's Symphony No 5 and Weber's *Euryanthe* Overture. Other events include English Touring Opera's *The Marriage of Figaro*, Tenebrae, and appearances from the Royal Northern Sinfonia with Lars Vogt, and Grimethorpe Colliery Band.

perthfestival.co.uk

Peasmarsh Chamber Music Festival

June 21-24

Co-directed by Anthony Marwood and Richard Lester, the festival in East Sussex celebrates its 20th anniversary this year. International guests include Mark Steinberg of the Brentano Quartet and pianist Dénes Várjon, and a particular highlight for 2018 includes the premiere of a new work for string quartet and children's voices.

peasmarshboxoffice@gmail.com

Plush Festival, Dorset

August 3-4 & 6, September 14-16

Plush Festival's events take place in St John's Church in Plush, Dorset, and running alongside the concerts themselves are open rehearsals. The 2018 edition is guest-curated by pianist Tim Horton, and one highlight is Andrés Schiff's return to the festival for Book II of Bach's *Well-Tempered Clavier*. Other visiting artists include the Heath Quartet, Italian pianist Filippo Gorini,

and Adrian Brendel performing all five of Beethoven's cello sonatas. The festival's final day features the annual Young Musicians Workshop for local students.

plushfestival.com

Portsmouth Festivities

June 15-24

With more than 100 events on offer, there are plenty of multi-arts experiences to be enjoyed this year. Highlights include percussion artists O Duo, Spanish guitarist Carlos Bonell and the Tallis Scholars.

portsmouthfestivities.co.uk

Prestegne Festival

August 23-28

This contemporary music festival has a Baltic flavour in 2018, presenting works by Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian composers. New British music also features strongly, with festival commissions including a Marian text setting from David Bednall, a song-cycle by Huw Watkins, and *Concertante Dances* for piano and chamber orchestra by the festival's composer-in-residence, Martin Butler.

prestegnefestival.com

Proms at St Jude's

June 23 - July 1

At St Jude-on-the-Hill in North London's Hampstead Garden Suburb, Aurora Orchestra play the first night with a Mozart programme, while other visiting artists include the Kanneh-Mason Piano Trio with Beethoven and Brahms, the Academy of Ancient Music with a programme of Vivaldi and Handel, and Nevill Holt Opera performing Mozart's comic masterpiece *The Marriage of Figaro*.

promsatstjudes.org.uk

Ryedale Festival

July 13-29

This North Yorkshire festival brings established and emerging artists to perform in historic venues across Ryedale. Details for 2018 weren't available as we went to press, so keep an eye on the website.

ryedalefestival.com

Sherborne Abbey Festival

May 4-8

With 70 per cent of all performances offering free entry, this is one of Dorset's most accessible music festivals. It has close ties with nearby Sherborne School, so expect the best of their musicians onstage over the course of the week, as well as Sherborne Abbey Choir. As for visiting artists, this year these include lutenist Elizabeth Kenny and tenor Kieran White, the Tallis Scholars in a programme of Orthodox music featuring Rachmaninov's *Vespers* alongside Tavener's *Great Canon* of 1982. There's also a Concerto Feast concert in which Thomas Hull

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www.ryedalefestival.com

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Monday 30 July
Elgar King Olaf

Tuesday 31 July
Monteverdi Vespers

Wednesday 1 August
Bruckner Te Deum
Mendelssohn Lobgesang

Thursday 2 August
Parry Best pair of Sirens
Parry Symphony No 5
Parry Invocation to Music

Friday 3 August
Ravel Le tombeau de Couperin
Boulanger Psalm 130
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conducts the Iuventus Chamber Orchestra in Bruch's Violin Concerto with Ruth Rogers and Schumann's Cello Concerto with Adrian Brendel. sherborneabbeyfestival.org

Southern Cathedrals Festival

July 18-21

Music, services and talks combine in this festival that rotates around the cathedrals of southern England, and stars their choirs. This year it's the turn of Salisbury Cathedral, featuring performances by nearly 100 choristers and 24 lay clerks from Chichester, Salisbury and Winchester Cathedrals. The 2018 programme marks the end of the First World War with an afternoon concert exploring war-themed music and poetry, and a lecture recital given by the chairman of the Elgar Society, Dr Steven Halls, in which he explores Elgar's Piano Quintet and Violin Sonata. Other highlights include performances of Handel's Coronation Anthems and Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem*, an organ recital by Daniel Cook, and candlelit Bach piano concerts. southerncathedralsfestival.org.uk

Southwell Music Festival

August 22-27

This festival, under the artistic directorship of baritone Marcus Farnsworth, takes place in and around Nottinghamshire's Southwell Minster, offering more than 30 events across six days. One highlight for 2018 is a performance of Elgar's Cello Concerto from 2016 BBC Young Musician of the Year winner, Sheku Kanneh-Mason, in a festival programme to also include Tippett's *A Child of Our Time*. southwellmusicfestival.com

St Endellion Summer Festival

July 31 - August 10

This Cornish festival under the artistic direction of Mark Padmore opens this year in St Endellion Church with a programme including Ryan Wigglesworth conducting Ravel's G major Piano Concerto with Charles Owen as the soloist, and Aidan Oliver conducting Elgar's *The Music Makers* featuring Susan Bickley. Elgar features prominently in the Truro Cathedral concert too, with Tim Gill as soloist in the Cello Concerto. Meanwhile the festival opera is Berlioz's *Damnation of Faust* under Ryan Wigglesworth; there is also a performance of Mahler's Symphony No 4, with Rowan Pierce as soloist. Also on the bill are chamber recitals and late-night concerts. endellionfestivals.org.uk

St Magnus International Festival

June 22-28

Under the directorship of Scottish composer Alasdair Nicolson, this Orkney festival whose 1977

founding group included Peter Maxwell Davies, uses venues throughout the ancient Orcadian landscape including the medieval Cathedral of St Magnus in Kirkwall, as well as on the islands of Westray and Hoy. Highlights for 2018 include Telemann's comic opera *Pimpinone* from the Danish Sinfonietta with Aarhus SommerOper. There are also several performances from the Barokksolistene directed by Bjarte Eike, including their Music at the Alehouse programme of Purcell overtures, English sea shanties, and Scandinavian folk songs. Other artists and ensembles include pianist Tom Poster with violinist Elena Urioste, and Red Note Ensemble with a new production of Peter Maxwell Davies's dance piece *Vesalii Icones*. stmagnusfestival.com

Stour Music Festival

June 22 - July 1

Founded by the countertenor Alfred Deller in 1962, this annual festival devoted to early music takes place in the pilgrim church of All Saints' Boughton Aluph in the Kent countryside. The Chelys Consort of Viols with soprano Emma Kirkby and lutenist James Akers open this year's proceedings, whilst other visiting ensembles include The English Concert and The King's Singers. Young artists appearing in the Late Night Extra slots include recorder player Tabea Debus, lutenist Matthew Wadsworth, and the ensemble Cententus VII. stourmusic.org.uk

Swaledale Festival

May 26 - June 9

This Yorkshire festival combines top-class musical acts and a very local flavour thanks to brass bands, folk music, and guided walks in the Dales countryside. Bach's *Goldberg Variations* features in a number of events this year, with performances by both harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani and pianist Angela Hewitt. Likewise, Marcus du Sautoy's Reeth Lecture focuses on Bach's use of symmetry in *Goldberg Variations*, plus it features in the screenings of *32 Short Films About Glenn Gould*. Another highlight is the Aurora Percussion Duo performing the world premieres of a piece by Graham Fitkin and of a Swaledale Festival commission by Andy Scott. Other visiting artists include the Hallé, the Marian Consort, violinist Jennifer Pike and Sacconi Quartet with James Gilchrist. swalefest.org

Three Choirs Festival

July 28 - August 4

It's Hereford's turn to host the historic festival and its orchestra-in-residence, the Philharmonia Orchestra. With over 70 concerts, recitals, talks, exhibitions and

HIGHLIGHT EVENT

York Early Music Festival

July 6-14

Themed 'Power and Politics', the 2018 festival includes concerts from Brecon Baroque directed by Rachel Podger, Gallicantus directed by Gabriel Crouch with the Rose Consort of Viols, and The Sixteen under the direction of Harry Christophers.

There's a strong focus on emerging talent, with appearances by Prisma, Voces Suaves, Rumorum, and the 2017 winners of the York Early Music International Artists Competition, BarrocoTout. ncem.co.uk/yemf



The 2017 winners BarrocoTout return to York

workshops over eight days, highlights include the opening concert, celebrating the centenary of universal suffrage with a rare performance of Ethel Smyth's Mass in D. Sir Andrew Davis returns for two concerts: the first, Elgar's *King Olaf*, and the second commemorating Sir Hubert Parry. The festival also completes its cycle of Mendelssohn's major choral works with his *Lobgesang*, and an orchestral concert pairs Holst's *The Planets* with a new commission. Chamber music recitals include harpsichordist Mahan Esfahani, pianist Clare Hammond, soprano Ruby Hughes and renowned tenor James Gilchrist. Late-night highlights include percussion pioneer Joby Burgess and an 'organ ceilidh' with Kit Downes. 3choirs.org

The Two Moors Festival

October 12 - 21

Taking place across the Dartmoor and Exmoor national parks, this festival presents a mix of chamber music, Lied recitals, a sprinkling of jazz, and also a musical church crawl. Amongst the artists for 2018 are pianists Yevgeny Sudbin and Stephen Kovacevich, cellist Alexander Chausian, tenor Mark Padmore, and flautist and recorder player Ashley Solomon. thetwomoorsfestival.co.uk

Ulverston International Music Festival

June 6-16

This annual festival under the artistic directorship of local pianist Anthony Hewitt is located within a stone's throw of the Lake District National Park, and offers performances from top international artists and exciting young talent which span the stylistic range from English Touring Opera, the Grimethorpe Colliery Band and jazz singer Joe Stilgoe, to chamber music. Highlights for 2018

include a lunchtime recital from oboist Nicholas Daniel, and Hewitt pairing up with fellow Ulverstonian saxophonist Jess Gillam and Camerata Tchaikovsky for a concerto double-bill of Glazunov's Saxophone Concerto and Shostakovich's Piano Concerto No 1. ulverstonmusicfestival.co.uk

Vale of Glamorgan Festival

May 9-16

Notable for celebrating the work of living composers, the festival has as one of its 2018 highlights a concert in Hoddinott Hall featuring the BBC National Orchestra of Wales performing the UK premiere of Qigang Chen's *Jiang Tcheng Tse* (For the Sake of Art) in a concert to also include Thierry Escaich's *Psalmos*. Another is a solo recital in Ewenny Priory from cellist Alice Neary. The final concert, at Penarth Pier Pavillion, sees Ensemble Midtvest deliver the world premiere of a new work created for them by the festival's Artistic Director, John Metcalf, that will explore the musical palindrome. valeofglamorganfestival.org.uk

West Meon Festival

September 14-16

Located in the Hampshire village of West Meon, this festival features the musicians of the Primrose Piano Quartet and their guests, presenting chamber music ranging from solos to piano quintets over the course of a long weekend. This year the festival culminates with a concert featuring tenor James Gilchrist, in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War. Elsewhere, radio presenter and pianist Paul Guinery contributes readings and chairs talks, and takes centre stage himself as pianist on Saturday afternoon with ensemble Harmoniemusik. Saturday morning, meanwhile, features a children's concert. westmeonmusic.co.uk

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www.chopin.nifc.pl



EUROPE FESTIVALS

Aix-en-Provence Festival

July 4-24

It's a big year for this major opera festival in 2018, as it celebrates its 70th anniversary, the 20th anniversary of its Académie, and marks the conclusion of Bernard Foccroulle's directorship. One highlight promises to be Katie Mitchell's new production of Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* featuring Sabine Devieille. Other operas are the world premiere of Ondrej Adamek's *Seven Stones*, Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* conducted by Raphaël Pichon, Mariusz Treliński's production of Prokofiev's *L'Ange de feu* (at the Grand Théâtre de Provence) conducted by Kazushi Ono, the premiere of *Orfeo & Majnun* conducted by Bassem Akiiki, and Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* performed by the young artists of Académie d'Aix.

festival-aix.com

Amiata Piano Festival

May 19 - December 9

Once again, the Tuscan festival - founded in 2005 - includes five stages of concerts: 'Concerto Anteprema' on May 19; 'Baccus' from June 28 to July 1; 'Euterpe' from July 26 to 28; 'Dionisus' from August 30 to September 2; and 'Concerti di Natale' from December 8 to 9. For details of the individual concerts, keep checking the website.

amiatapianofestival.com

Festival International de Piano de La Roque d'Anthéron

July 20 - August 18

This major French festival boasts an impressive main concert space in the grounds of the Château de Florans. Its visiting artists

are always an impressive and interesting bunch, and indeed it's a great place to hear some of the top keyboardists not so regularly seen on UK or US shores. Pianists for 2018 include Boris Berezovsky, Anne Queffélec, Nikolai Lugansky, Claire Désert and Nicholas Angelich, harpsichordists Bertrand Cuiller and Pierre Hantaï. Trio Wanderer also perform, plus violinists Olivier Charlier and Renaud Capuçon.

festival-piano.com

Bergen International Festival

May 23 - June 6

Two weeks in which one of the oldest cities in Norway, set against a dramatic backdrop of fjords, showcases the best of Norwegian arts and the wider northern European scene. This year opens with Edward Gardner conducting the Bergen Philharmonic Orchestra and brass/percussion ensemble Eikanger-Bjørsvik Musikklag in Berlioz's *Grande Messe des Morts*, the choral component consisting of the Bergen National Opera, the Edvard Grieg Choir, the Bergen Philharmonic Choir, Collegium Músicúm and the Royal Northern College of Music Choir, with the young tenor Bror Magnus Tødenes as soloist.

fib.no

Festival Berlioz

August 18 - September 2

The festival is held in Hector Berlioz's birthplace town of La Côte Saint-André, near Grenoble, with concerts in the hilltop Chateau Louis XI and the surrounding villages. This year's theme is Berlioz *Sacré* (Sacred Berlioz), performances including the *Grande Messe des*

Morts conducted by François-Xavier Roth, the sacred trilogy *L'Enfance du Christ* with the Orchestre de Chambre Nouvelle Aquitaine, and the *Messe Solennelle* with the Concert Spirituel & Choir under Hervé Niquet. Also on the bill are two major concerts from John Eliot Gardiner with the English Baroque Soloists and the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique, one featuring a Bach cantata, and the other Berlioz's *Le Corsaire* overture, the *Cléopâtre* cantata and *Harold in Italy* with viola soloist Antoine Tamestit.

festivalberlioz.com

Bregenz Festival

July 18 - August 20

Famed for its picturesque lake stage, the Bregenz Festival opens this year with the Austrian premiere of Berthold Goldschmidt's opera *Beatrice Cenci* (completed in 1950 but not premiered until 1988), directed by Johannes Erath with Johannes Debus conducting the Vienna Symphony Orchestra. Also on the lake stage for 2018 is *Carmen*, while the Workshop Theatre will stage a brand new festival-commissioned opera by Thomas Larcher, directed by actor and film director Karl Markovics, and with Michael Boder conducting the Ensemble Modern. Non-operatic highlights at the Festspielhaus include the Austrian premiere of Thomas Larcher's *Alle Tage*, followed by Beethoven's Symphony No 5; also the Vorarlberg Symphony Orchestra with a programme including Mark Padmore singing Britten's *Nocturne*.

bregenzerfestspiele.com

Budapest Festival, Bruges

May 16-19

The Amsterdam Concertgebouw hosts this four-day visit from the Budapest Festival Orchestra centred on the music of Mahler. It begins with a chamber music concert featuring Dénes Várjon, Izabella Simon and musicians of the BFO. Then comes Symphony No 4 with soloist Christiane Karg, *Das Lied von der Erde*, and the Second Symphony to conclude.

concertgebouw.be/en/programmagids/detail/8478

Chopin and His Europe Festival

August 10-31

This is the 14th edition of the Warsaw-based festival, and boasts 50 concerts performed by a total of 500 musicians. Soloists this year include Leif Ove Andsnes, Benjamin Grosvenor and Nelson Freire. Ensembles include the

Bergen PO under Edward Gardner, and the Russian National Orchestra under Mikhail Pletnev.

en.chopin.nifc.pl/institute

Chorégies d'Orange

June 20 - August 4

With performances staged in the 8300-seat ancient Roman Théâtre Antique d'Orange near Avignon, this opera festival has a particularly awe-inspiring backdrop. This year opens with, for the first time in the festival's history, a woman on the conductor's podium, as Nathalie Stutzmann conducts Arrigo Boito's *Mefistofele* with a cast headed by Erwin Schrott in the title-role, and Jean-François Borras as Faust, supported by L'Orchestre philharmonique de Radio France, the choirs of the Operas of Avignon, Monte-Carlo and Nice, and the Children's Choir of the Académie Rainier-III-de-Monaco. A ballet highlight meanwhile is Maurice Béjart's *La Flûte enchantée* of 1981, danced by the Béjart Ballet Lausanne. Recitals in the Cour Saint Louis are by Edgardo Rocha, Eva-Maria Westbroek and George Petean.

choregies.fr

Dans les Jardins de William Christie

August 25 - September 1

Taking place in Thiré, in France's Pays de la Loire region, Les Arts Florissants' summer festival under the artistic direction of their leader William Christie fuses together Christie's two passions of music and gardens. It also shines a light on young talents including those from The Juilliard School's Historic Performance department. Concerts take place on the miroir d'eau, while short concerts (promenades musicales) are dotted around the numerous themed gardens and candlelit, meditative performances in the village church.

arts-florissants.com/main/en_GB/festival-jardins-william-christie.html

Dresden Music Festival

May 10 - June 10

Mirrors is the 2018 theme for this festival under the artistic direction of cellist Jan Vogler, with highlights including the world premiere of Tan Dun's *Buddha Passion*. Also worth noting is the festival-within-the-festival celebration of the cello, Cellomania, whose highlights include Helmut Branny conducting the soloists of the Dresdner Kapellsolisten in both Haydn cello concertos, played by Johannes Moser and Daniel

HIGHLIGHT EVENT

Beethovenfest Bonn

August 31 - September 23

This festival celebrates the works of Beethoven alongside complementary Classical pieces, and brand new works inspired by his music. This year opens with a tribute marking the First World War: Mikko Franck directing the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France in Ravel's *Tombeau de Couperin*, plus Saint-Saëns's Piano Concerto No 5 with Bertrand Chamayou as soloist, and Beethoven's Symphony No 5. The closing concert sees the ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien conducted by Michael Boder pair Morton Feldmann's *Coptic Light* of 1986 with Bruckner's Symphony No 9. The annual world premiere of a festival commission programmed either side of the Beethoven work that inspired it is Bernhard Lang's piece for piano and orchestra, *Monadologie XXXIV Loops for Ludvik*; the MDR Sinfonieorchester perform this, directed by Stefan Asbury with pianist Marino Formenti.

beethovenfest.de

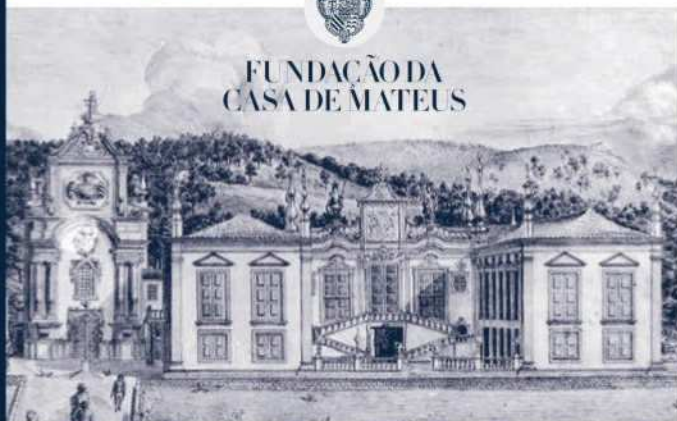


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Müller-Schott. Mischa Maisky celebrates his 70th birthday with a performance alongside his children, violinist Sascha Maisky and pianist Lily Maisky, and there's then a whopper of a finale in the form of a Kulturpalast performance bringing together no fewer than 17 international cellists, including Andreas Brantelid, Pablo Ferrández, Alban Gerhardt, Miklós Perényi, Christian Poltéra, Kian Soltani, Jan Vogler, Alisa Weilerstein and Pieter Wispelwey.

musikfestspiele.com

Rencontres d'Évian

June 30 - July 7

This Swiss chamber music festival under the artistic direction of Quatuor Modigliani presents concerts in the pretty 300-seater Théâtre Antoine-Riboud of 1892 in Évian's centre, plus the extraordinary all-wood 1200-seater La Grange au Lac, built in 1993 for previous artistic director Mstislav Rostropovich. Kicking off 2018 is the Hagen Quartet, with a programme including anniversary-composer Debussy's String Quartet. Other top chamber ensembles include the James Ehnes Quartet and Trio Zimmermann. Those with an eye on the next generation should catch the collaboration between violinist Marc Bouchkov, viola player Lise Berthaud, cellist Victor Julien-Laferrière and pianist Éric Le Sage. Esa-Pekka Salonen closes the festival directing its newly formed Sinfonia Grange au Lac, comprised of instrumentalists from top European ensembles, in Beethoven's *Eroica*.

rencontres-musicales-evian.fr

Göttingen International Handel Festival

May 10-21

'Conflicts' is the theme for 2018, not least because of the First World War anniversary. To that end, the main operatic event at the Deutsches Theater Göttingen is the conflict-themed *Arminio* in a new production by Erich Sidler, with festival Artistic Director Laurence Cummings directing the festival's resident orchestra. Other highlights include the opening concert of *Judas Maccabaeus*, with the NDR Chor and Kenneth Tarver in the title-role. Visiting instrumental soloists and ensembles performing in venues such as the Great Hall of Göttingen University include recorder player Giovanni Antonini, violinist Midori Seiler, and the London Handel Players. Also in the mix are lectures, guided tours, 'crossover' events, and concerts for both young and old.

haendel-festspiele.de

Gstaad Menuhin Festival

July 13 - September 1

Yehudi Menuhin founded the

Gstaad Festival in 1957, and these days it's a star-studded and many-stranded affair. The theme for 2018 is, appropriately enough, 'The Alps', highlights of which include a 'Wagner in the Mountains' Symphony Gala, with Jaap van Zweden conducting the Gstaad Festival Orchestra, plus tenor Jonas Kaufmann, soprano Martina Serafin and baritone Falk Struckmann. Other Alpine-themed highlights include 'High on the mountain, deep in the valley', for which Van Zweden and the Orchestra are joined by pianist Hélène Grimaud, and Valery Gergiev conducting Denis Matsuev and the Mariinsky Orchestra in Strauss's *Eine Alpensinfonie*. Other visiting artists include cellist Sol Gabetta, countertenor Philippe Jaroussky, and violinists Maxim Vengerov and Janine Jansen.

gstaadmenuhinfestival.ch

Heidenheim Opera Festival

June 13 - July 29

'Refuge' is the 2018 theme for this festival, based at Hellenstein Castle under the artistic directorship of Marcus Bosch. For 2018, there are two new productions of Verdi operas. First is *Nabucco*, with a cast including Antonio Yang, Astghik Khanamiryan and Randall Jakobsh, with Bosch himself conducting the Czech Philharmonic Choir Brno and the Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra. Then *I Lombardi*, directed by Tobias Heyder, and Bosch conducting Cappella Aquileia. The opening concert features Fazil Say's Clarinet Concerto with soloist Reto Bieri alongside the Nuremberg State Philharmonic Orchestra under Josep Caballé-Domenech. A Pauluskirche chamber highlight is recorder player Stefan Temmingh in a programme of Baroque music with soprano Dorothee Mields and Wolfgang Katschner's Lautten Compagnie Berlin.

opernfestspiele.de

Herrenchiemsee Festival

July 17-29

'Europa!' is the theme of this year's Herrenchiemsee Festival, which takes place in Herrenchiemsee Castle's Spiegelsaal and in the monastery of the Fraueninsel. Highlights this year include the opening concert in the monastery, featuring three Bach cantatas performed by the KlangVerwaltung Orchestra and Chamber chorus under the direction of Enoch zu Guttenberg with soloists Sibylla Rubens, Olivia Vermeulen, Daniel Johansson and Thomas Laske. Another is a concert in the castle's Hall of Mirrors where Europa Galante and Fabio Biondi present a double-faceted programme focusing on Italian composers in France, and also French composers in Italy.

herrenchiemsee-festspiele.de

HIGHLIGHT EVENT

Grafenegg Festival

August 17 - September 9

Under the artistic direction of pianist Rudolf Buchbinder, this 'Austrian Tanglewood' takes place in the grounds of Grafenegg Castle just outside Vienna. This year's opening performance commemorates the end of the First World War with the resident Tonkünstler Orchestra under Yutaka Sado performing Britten's *War Requiem*. The other



Grafenegg 2018 marks the end of World War I

Orchestra in Residence is the European Union Youth Orchestra, while other performing ensembles and artists include the Staatskapelle Dresden, the Filarmonica della Scala di Milano, Nicolaj Znaider, Hélène Grimaud, and two tenors making their festival debuts, Jonas Kaufmann and Juan Diego Flórez. The composer-in-residence meanwhile is Ryan Wigglesworth, who also leads the composer-conductor workshop Ink Still Wet. There are also two new concert strands for 2018 in the form of Late Night Sessions and the afternoon Music in the Park.

grafenegg.com

Incontri in Terra di Siena

July 28 - August 4

This Tuscan festival is under the artistic directorship of pianist Alessio Bax; concerts take place in the courtyard of the La Foce estate, famous for its garden, as well as venues throughout the Val d'Orcia region. The festival turns 30 this year, and has a suitably starry programme. Highlights include cellist Antonio Lysy and Emmanuel Pahud joining the Camerata Strumentale di Prato for Haydn's Cello Concerto No 1 and Devienne's Flute Concerto No 7 conducted by Jonathan Webb. Ian Bostridge returns, appearing in three different programmes including a Schubertiade with colleagues Leif Ove Andsnes, Lawrence Power and Antonio Lysy. Other visiting artists include Lucille Chung, Daishin Kashimoto, Annabelle Meare and Christian Poltéra.

itslafoce.org

Innsbruck Festival of Early Music

July 17 - August 27

This early music festival in the capital of Austria's Tyrol is a great place to hear top period-performance specialists who don't appear regularly in the UK or US. Take the opening concert in Ambras Castle's Spanish Hall, which celebrates the period wind-instrument maker Rudolf Tutz, who died last year. Barthold Kuijken, Linde Brunmayr-Tutz and other transverse flute players will perform quintets by Boismortier on Tutz flutes, as well as high-Baroque trio sonatas, accompanied by Lars Ulrik Mortensen on the harpsichord. Also to be enjoyed are church services featuring early music, and the final of the Baroque opera-singing Cesti Competition.

altemusik.at/en

International Chamber Music Festival Utrecht: Harriet Krijgh and friends

June 27 - July 1

Five days hosted by Utrecht's TivoliVredenburg under which top international soloists and ensembles come together to perform chamber music, under the artistic direction of cellist Harriet Krijgh. Full details of the festival's programme will be available on the festival's website from April 3.

kamermuziekfestival.nl

Itinéraire Baroque

July 26-29

Harpsichordist and conductor Ton Koopman's festival is set in the northern Dordogne region of Périgord Vert, and celebrates both Baroque music and the medieval architecture of the area. This year opens with Koopman directing his Amsterdam Baroque Orchestra with a programme including Telemann and Bach. There's also a Spanish theme, with Baroque dance from dancers Anna Román, Carles Mas and Jaime Puente. Then the annual highlight is the Saturday 'itinéraire', which this year starts with a recorder recital by Reine-Marie Verhagen, followed by five 'taster' concerts in a circuit of small Romanesque churches, a different set of performers in each church performing a 40-minute concert to each group of concert-goers.

itinerairebaroque.com

Lofoten Piano Festival

July 9-15

Set amid the spectacular scenery of Norway's Lofoten islands, this festival now alternates each year between piano and chamber music. This year it's the turn of piano, and is under the artistic direction of Bertrand Chamayou. Highlights include the opening concert where

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Thu	10.05.18	Obrecht's <i>Missa de Sancto Donatiano</i> by The Tallis Scholars A Bruges masterpiece by a genuine Renaissance celebrity
Sat	12.05.18	Jacob Clemens's <i>Missa Gaude lux Donatiane</i> by Huelgas Ensemble The music of a mythical church rings through to the present
Sat	12.05.18	Take Out Obrecht Free concert trail through the city with season composer Frederik Neyrinck

Chamayou performs alongside fellow pianists Lise de la Salle, Francesco Piemontesi, Ah Ruem Ahn and Yulianna Avdeeva, joined by the Oslo Camerata and the Enggard Quartet. Leif Ove Andsnes also appears.
lofotenfestival.no

Lucerne Summer Festival

August 17 – September 16

Featuring four weeks of more than 100 concerts by some of the world's major international artists and ensembles, this year's festival opens with Riccardo Chailly conducting the Lucerne Festival Orchestra and soloist Lang Lang in Mozart's Piano Concerto No 24 in C minor, K491, the programme also including Stravinsky's *The Firebird* and *Dumbarton Oaks*. Among the other visiting artists are Daniel Barenboim with the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe conducted by Bernard Haitink with keyboard soloist András Schiff, the Berlin Philharmonic with Kirill Petrenko, the Mahler Chamber Orchestra conducted by François-Xavier Roth with cellist Sol Gabetta, and the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra under James Gaffigan with pianist Daniil Trifonov.
lucernefestival.ch

MA Festival

August 3-12

Based in Bruges, this early music festival has a special focus on the next generation of artists, and to that end one of its key events is its International Competition Musica Antiqua for young Baroque soloists. Beyond the competition, 2018 is themed 'Cherchez la femme', scanning early music for the voices of woman composers, along with those whose actual voices sounded from cloisters, opera houses and salons, and those who commissioned or had music dedicated to them. Visiting artists and ensembles include harpsichordists Skip Sempé and Catalina Vicens, Theatre of the Ayre, Ensemble Le Caravansérail, and alto Wiebke Lehmkuhl.
mafestival.be

Malta International Music Festival

April 15 – May 1

This Valletta-based festival is in its sixth year, and boasts some top artist appearances among its mix of solo recitals, chamber and orchestral concerts. Artists making their festival debuts this year include violinists Maxim Vengerov, Ray Chen and Salvatore Accardo, clarinetist Andreas Ottensamer and pianist Nikolai Lugansky. Meanwhile there will be orchestral performances in the Republic Hall of Valetta's Mediterranean Conference Centre and the Robert Samut Hall

in Floriana from the Armenian State Symphony Orchestra and the Malta Philharmonic Orchestra.
maltafest.eu

Matthias Kendlinger Festival

July 10-14

Run by Austrian composer Matthias Georg Kendlinger, and featuring his own works, the MK Festival's concerts take place in the Lviv Philharmonic and in the Lviv Opera. Highlights include the world premiere of his Symphony No 3.
philharmonia.lviv.ua

Festival de Musique Menton

June 28 – August 11

Established in 1950, this French Riviera festival is one of Europe's oldest and most prestigious, attracting big names each year. Details for 2018 hadn't been announced as we went to press, though the opening and closing concerts are hosted by the town's Baroque basilica of Saint Michel Archange, so do check the website.
festival-musique-menton.fr

Moritzburg Festival

August 11-26

A Dresden-based festival under the artistic directorship of cellist Jan Vogler, the Moritzburg Festival has become one of the most renowned international chamber music festivals since its inception in 1993. Established and young musicians rehearse, then perform chamber music together in venues such as the Moritzburg Castle and Dresden's Transparent Factory of Volkswagen. Highlights for 2018 include the Long Night of Chamber Music in the Lutheran Church, and the 'Proschwitz Picnic' in the gardens of Proschwitz Castle. Visiting artists include mandolin player Avi Avital, violinists Paul Huang, Benjamin Beilman and Mira Wang, cellist Narek Hakhnazaryan and flautist Mathieu Dufour.
moritzburgfestival.de/english

Molyvos International Music Festival

August 16-19

Themed 'Genesis' in 2018, this Greek chamber music festival under the artistic direction of Danae and Kiveli Dörken brings together the greatest international young talents alongside established names.
molyvosfestival.com/en/

Munich Opera Festival

June 24 – July 31

'Show Me Your Wound' is the theme for 2018. The premieres are Wagner's *Parsifal* directed by Pierre Audi, Kirill Petrenko conducting a cast with Christian Gerhaher, Bálint Szabó, René Pape, Jonas Kaufmann, Wolfgang Koch and Nina Stemme, and with sets by internationally celebrated painter Georg Baselitz who celebrates

HIGHLIGHT EVENT

Kissinger Sommer

June 15 – July 15

Held in the Bavarian spa town of Bad Kissingen, this festival has the Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen as its resident orchestra. The theme for 2018 is '1918 – Departure into Modernity', a highlight of which is Stravinsky's *The Soldier's Tale*, featuring violinist Daniel Hope, Thomas Quasthoff as the narrator and actress Katja Riemann as the Devil. Opening night sees the orchestra joined by cellist Sol Gabetta; she can also be seen in a duo recital with pianist Bertrand Chamou, and in a one-off trio concert that will only be performed at the festival with violinist Janine Jansen and pianist Alexander Gavryluk. Other visiting artists include soprano Anna Caterina Antonacci, percussionist Martin Grubinger, conductor Valery Gergiev and the orchestra of the Russian-German Music Academy, violinist Giuliano Carmignola, and pianist Menahem Pressler.
kissingersommer.de



Cellist Sol Gabetta opens 2018's Kissinger Sommer

his 80th birthday this year; then Haydn's *Orlando Paladino*, Ivor Bolton conducting Axel Ranisch's staging. Two further premieres from the Festival Workshop are *Die Vorübergehenden* (The Passers-By) and *Zeig mir deine Wunder* (Show me your miracles). Another pillar of the festival this year is Petrenko conducting Andreas Kriegenburg's 2012 production for the company of *Der Ring des Nibelungen*. Highlights of the ballet evenings meanwhile are the three Young Choreographers evenings.
staatsoper.de

Musique Cordiale

July 28 – August 11

Orchestral concerts, song and oratorio in medieval hill towns take place between Nice and Aix-en-Provence, as well as the Musique Cordiale Strings Academy for advanced string players, led by Chilingirian Quartet members Levon Chilingirian and Susie Mészáros. Concert highlights for 2018 include a performance of Haydn's *The Seasons*.
musique-cordiale.com

The New Generation Festival

August 29 – September 1

This Florence festival of opera, music and theatre, set in the private Gardens of the Renaissance-era Palazzo Corsini, is devoted to bringing up the next generation of top artists. Highlights for 2018 include Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with soloist Charlie Siem, a late-night concert in the Chiesa di Ognissanti featuring Siem with cellist Erica Piccotti and pianist Itamar Golan, and a full staging of Shakespeare's *Henry V* set to William Walton's orchestral score, performed live.
newgenerationfestival.org

New Ross Piano Festival

September 26-30

This County Wexford-based festival, founded in 2006, features three pianists at each main concert. Among the many artists appearing this year are the American pianist Anne-Marie McDermott, making her Irish debut, and the young Romanian pianist Alexandra Dariescu.
newrosspianofestival.com

Operadagen Rotterdam

May 18-27

The 10-day festival presents contemporary music theatre and opera productions, as well as a fringe programme with many more shows taking place in unexpected locations throughout the city of Rotterdam, adding up to over 100 performances. This year's festival opens with Wouter Van Looy's *Earth Diver*, a musical-theatrical spectacle, for which the audience sit within an installation surrounded by video images, and singers of the ChorWerk Ruhr performing the music of Heinrich Schütz. Other musical highlights include Capella Mediterranea under conductor Leonardo García Alarcón, and the Orkest van de Achttiende Eeuw and Capella Amsterdam with Brahms's *Ein deutsches Requiem* conducted by Daniel Reuss and featuring soloists Carolyn Sampson and André Morsch.
operadagenrotterdam.nl/en

Prague Spring Festival

May 12– June 3

The Czech Philharmonic & Tomáš Netopil open this year's festival with a Smetana programme. Other ensembles performing include the Royal Concertgebouw Amsterdam and the Monteverdi Singers under John Eliot Gardiner, while chamber highlights include a recital from violinist Julian Rachlin

HIGHLIGHT EVENT

Rosendal Chamber Music Festival

August 9-12

Situated in Rosendal on the west coast of Norway, this chamber music festival, founded by pianist Leif Ove Andsnes, takes the First World War as its theme for 2018. The opening concert in the Great Hall of the Baroniet Rosendal estate offers a programme including Nielsen's *Chaconne* Op 32, Ravel's



Andsnes (third from right) celebrates Debussy

Tombeau de Couperin and Dohnányi's Piano Quintet No 2, with Andsnes joined by the Dover Quartet, violinist Akiko Suwanai, cellist Edgar Moreau, and pianists Ingrid Andsnes and Bertrand Chamayou. For the Debussy anniversary, there's *Dances sacrales et profanes*, and the cello and violin sonatas, among other works; for this Andsnes is again joined by Chamayou, Moreau, Suwanai and the Dover Quartet, plus double bassist Tim Gibbs, harpist Sivan Magen, flautist Guy Eshed and viola player Lars Anders Tomter. rosendalfestival.com

and Itamar Golan. One of the most exciting elements of the festival is its competition, split into cello and French horn strands; on the programme for the cello finalists is Dvořák's Cello Concerto, performing with the Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra and Jiří Rožán, while the horn finalists play Strauss's Horn Concerto No 2 under Marek Šedivý with the Prague Philharmonia. festival.cz

Reykjavik Arts Festival

June 1-17

Events take place in numerous cultural venues in and around Reykjavik for this wide-ranging multidisciplinary festival. This year the Iceland Symphony and Osmo Vänskä open the festival in Eldborg's Harpa Hall with Mahler's 'Resurrection' Symphony, joined by the Motet Choir of Hallgrímskirkja with soloists Christiane Karg and Sasha Cooke. Vänskä and the orchestra also perform Mahler's Symphony No 2. listahatid.is/en

Rheingau Musik Festival

June 23 - September 1

With 155 concerts held at scores of venues across the Rheingau and adjoining regions, this is a huge festival. The main venues are Eberbach Monastery, Johannisberg Palace, Vollrads Palace and the Wiesbaden Assembly Rooms, and these are supplemented by numerous churches and wineries. Details for 2018 weren't yet available when we went to press, so keep an eye on the website. rheingau-musik-festival.de

Salzburg Festival

July 20 - August 30

Mozart's birthplace becomes the scene for major operatic productions, theatrical productions and concerts each summer, operas

mostly performed by the resident Vienna Philharmonic. This year opens with a new production from Lydia Steier of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Costantino Carydis conducting the Vienna Philharmonic. Other offerings in 2018 include new productions of Strauss's *Salome* conducted by Franz Welser-Möst, Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* conducted by Mariss Jansons, Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* with Les Arts Florissants conducted by William Christie, and Henze's *The Bassarids* conducted by Kent Nagano. salzburgfestival.at

Savonlinna Opera Festival

July 6 - August 4

Operas at this Finnish festival take place in the grounds of the city's medieval Olavinlinna castle. The new production for this year is Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, with Alexander Vedernikov conducting. Also on the bill are Gounod's *Faust*, Verdi's *Otello*, and three Puccini operas: *Madama Butterfly*, *Tosca* and *Turandot*, the latter two performed by the Tuscan Puccini Festival Orchestra and Choir. operafestival.fi/en

Schubertiade Hohenems, Markus Sittikus Hall

April/May, July, September, October

Schubertiade Schwarzenberg, Angelika Kauffmann Hall

June/July, August/September

This celebration presents a multitude of events across two different venues, encompassing song, piano, chamber and orchestral concerts, lectures, exhibitions and masterclasses. Hohenems highlights include the complete Schubert symphonies and symphonic fragments from L'Orfeo Barockorchester under

Michi Gaigg, and Renaud Capuçon, Kian Soltani and Lahav Shani playing Dvořák's Piano Trio in F minor and Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio in A minor. Schwarzenberg highlights include the Armida Quartet and clarinetist Jörg Widmann playing Schubert, Weber and Scarlatti, and Lieder from Anne-Sophie von Otter with Kristian Bezuidenhout on fortepiano. schubertiade.at

Stresa Festival

July 14-27; August 23 - September 9

Under the artistic directorship of Gianandrea Noseda, 27 concerts are performed on stunning Lake Maggiore and its surrounds. As always, while the focus is on music, there are opportunities for audiences to enjoy theatre, dance, literature and film. stresafestival.eu

Suoni dal Gofò

August 16-31

This festival of music and poetry was launched only last year by Italian conductor Gianluca Marciano, in his hometown of Lerici. The festival programme is inspired by the sea and by the poets who were drawn to the Ligurian coast. Highlights include a full day dedicated to Rossini, Tchaikovsky's *Manfred* Symphony, and the Italian premiere of Liszt's recently discovered opera *Sardanapale*. The festival will also include an evening for voice and piano inspired by Shelley, a recital with Italian pianist Vanessa Benelli Mosell, and the continued summer residency for the festival's newly formed training academy for young musicians from across the globe, Orchestra Excellence. suonidalgolfo.com

Trasimeno Music Festival

June 29 - July 5

Established by pianist Angela Hewitt, this Umbrian festival takes place in beautiful venues in Magione, Perugia, Cortona and Campo. The 2018 festival centres around Hewitt's performance of Bach's *The Well-Tempered Clavier* - her first in a decade, as part of her Bach Odyssey. There's also a first festival appearance from pianist Gabriela Montero, who performs Bach and Mozart concertos with Hewitt and the Salzburg Camerata. Other artists include violinist William Chiquito and soprano Ilona Domnich. trasimenomusicfestival.com

Verbier Festival

July 19 - August 5

Switzerland's major alpine festival turns 25 this year, and two extraordinary offerings tell you all you need to know about the celebratory feel across its usual mix of world-class chamber and symphonic performances and masterclasses. Valery Gergiev kicks

things off in style on opening night, conducting the Verbier Festival Orchestra in Rodion Shchedrin's *Diptyque symphonique* and Rimsky Korsakov's *Sheherazade*, plus three works that showcase some of today's top young soloists: Saint Saëns's *Introduction et Rondo capriccioso* with violinist Daniel Lozakovich, Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No 1 with pianist George Li, and Bernstein's 'Glitter and be Gay' (*Candide*) with soprano Pretty Yende. Later, the 25th birthday Gala Concert presents a 30-strong line-up of festival regulars including Pinchas Zukerman, Martha Argerich, Maxim Vengerov and Yuri Bashmet, alongside the Festival Orchestra. verbierfestival.com

Verona Arena Opera Festival

June 22 - September 1

Verona's arena, the third largest Roman amphitheatre in the world, is the spectacular setting for this Italian opera festival. A new staging of Bizet's *Carmen* from Hugo de Ana opens 2018's offerings. Other operas for 2018 include Verdi's *Aida* and *Nabucco*, Puccini's *Turandot* and Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. There are also gala events in the form of a Special Opera Night, and dance from Roberto Bolle and Friends. arena.it

West Cork Chamber Music Festival

June 29 - July 8

The coastal town of Bantry in County Cork has its usual strong roster of performing artists. Highlights include the Irish premiere of Jonathan Dove's *In Damascus* from tenor Mark Padmore and the Elias Quartet. Other visiting artists include pianist Barry Douglas, Apollon Musagète Quartet, Halcyon Quartet and soprano Ruby Hughes. westcorkmusic.ie

Zeist Music Days

August 11-25

Held in the central Netherlands town of Zeist, this chamber music festival offers concerts and masterclasses. Ensembles this year include the Jerusalem Quartet, Hagen Quartet, Schumann Quartet, Sitkovetsky Piano Trio, and the trio of Felix Klierer (horn), Andrej Bielov (violin) and Herbert Schuch (piano). In addition to these concerts, there will be a series of masterclasses for young professional ensembles given by the Jerusalem Quartet, Schumann Quartet, Alexander Sitkovetsky (Sitkovetsky Trio violinist), Wu Qian (Sitkovetsky Trio pianist), cellist Marcin Sienawski, and author of *The Singing Body*, movement expert Iris Goren. The masterclasses will be followed by a student concert tour. zeistmusicdays.nl; zeistermuziekdagen.nl

KIRKER MUSIC HOLIDAYS

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We also host our own exclusive music festivals on land and at featuring internationally acclaimed musicians. For those who prefer to travel independently we arrange short breaks with opera, ballet or concert tickets, to all the great classical cities in Europe.

THE DRESDEN MUSIC FESTIVAL

A SEVEN NIGHT HOLIDAY | 15 MAY 2018

For more than forty years the annual Dresden Music Festival has added to the rich fabric of musical life in the Saxon capital on the banks of the Elbe. The city's grand Baroque architecture has been meticulously restored after the destruction wrought in 1945, and today's visitors quickly appreciate why the city was, in its heyday, compared to Florence.

During our visit we will see the symbolic Frauenkirche, the magnificent rococo Zwinger Palace, and the art collections of the Electors of Saxony at the Albertinum. We shall attend six Festival performances, including the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra at the recently modernised Kulturpalast, an iconic example of GDR architecture, and three operas at Gottfried Semper's famous opera house.



Price from £2,987 per person (single supp. £398) including return flights, accommodation with breakfast, three lunches, two dinners, tickets for six performances, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader.

THE PUCCINI OPERA FESTIVAL IN TUSCANY

FIVE NIGHT HOLIDAYS | 25 JULY & 9 AUGUST 2018

Giacomo Puccini was born into a musical family in Lucca on 22 December 1858. Each summer his operas are performed in Torre del Lago on the peaceful shores of Lake Massaciuccoli.

Our holidays include three performances and the operas this summer are La bohème, Turandot and Manon Lescaut in July and Madama Butterfly, Il trittico and Tosca in August. We stay at the 3* Albergo Celide, just outside Lucca's magnificent walls and from here we shall enjoy a walking tour, including a visit to the house where Puccini was born and two great Tuscan gardens – the Villa Reale in Marlia and the Villa Garzoni.

Price from £2,193 per person (single supp. £198) for five nights including flights, accommodation with breakfast, four dinners, tickets for three operas and one concert, all sightseeing, and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader.



THE KIRKER CORNWALL MUSIC FESTIVAL

A FOUR NIGHT HOLIDAY | 1 OCTOBER 2018

Following on from the annual success of the Kirker Music Festival in St. Mawes, we've added a new Cornish Music Festival which includes three concerts given by the Piatti Quartet.

Highlights include visits to Boconnoc near Lostwithiel, where we will be welcomed by Elizabeth Fortescue who lives on the vast estate. We will visit the house twice – once for a morning concert and again for an evening concert followed by dinner in the house. There will be a third concert in the St. Mawes Methodist Chapel. Based in the pretty town of Fowey, our holiday will also include a visit to the newly reopened Tate Gallery in St. Ives and the Barbara Hepworth Studio and Garden.



Price from £1,498 (single supp. £298) for four nights including accommodation with breakfast, one lunch, four dinners, three concerts, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader.

THE KIRKER MUSIC FESTIVAL IN TENERIFE

A SEVEN NIGHT HOLIDAY | 12 JANUARY 2019

For our fourth exclusive music festival on the island of Tenerife, we will present a series of six concerts featuring the Gould Piano Trio, pianist Benjamin Frith, soprano Ilona Domnich and violist Simon Rowland-Jones.

Staying at the 5* Hotel Botanico, surrounded by lush tropical gardens, we shall also enjoy a programme of fascinating excursions. Highlights include the Sitio Litro Orchid Garden, a cable car journey to the peak of Mount Teide and a visit to the primeval cloud forest of the Anaga Mountains. We will also visit historic and picturesque villages along the spectacular north coast, including Garachico with its 17th century convent.

Price from £2,698 per person (single supp. £375) for seven nights including flights, transfers, accommodation with breakfast, six dinners, six private concerts, all sightseeing, entrance fees and gratuities and the services of the Kirker Tour Leader.



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WESTERN *Voices*

Jed Distler offers an insight into three American festivals which combine serious music-making with the peace and beauty of some stunning scenery

The American West evokes the world of myths and legends, folk heroes and film genres, plus archetypes and stereotypes that resist tearing down. It's also home to one spectacular natural setting, landscape and national park after another. While these places thrive, and sometimes suffer, as tourist destinations, certain locales have

long held special attraction to musicians, who draw inspiration from rural and remote surroundings at far remove from big city pressures. Such situations lend themselves to concentrated work and spontaneous play; they also create a sense of community that appeals not just to performers, composers and students, but also to music-loving audiences who hanker for travel and adventure.

Grand Teton Music Festival

The Grand Teton Music Festival was launched in 1962 as part of the larger Jackson Hole

Fine Arts Festival. Concerts originally took place at the historically landmarked Jackson Lake Lodge and in the Jackson Hole High School gymnasium before the festival moved into the neighbouring Teton Village. A permanent structure at the foot of Rendezvous Mountain, Walk Festival Hall, became the festival's home in 1974, and is significant for its excellent sightlines, amphitheatre-style seating and sophisticated sound reinforcement.

World-class music-making and intense outdoor activity go hand in hand during the festival's seven weeks, whether one is spotting wild game innocently ambling about in the wilderness, or driving to the nearby Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks for some serious hiking. Should you decide to stay closer to town in the vicinity where festival artists are



Grand Teton owes its alchemy to 'fresh mountain air and outstanding musicians'

housed, you'll be more likely to hear musicians practising in the distance, as opposed to bear growls and moose calls.

The Grand Teton Music Festival Orchestra members are chosen from many of America's first-tier ensembles, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Chicago Symphony and the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. Conductor Donald Runnicles has been Grand Teton's Music Director since 2006 and, more than a decade on, it clearly holds great appeal for him. 'Breathing the fresh mountain air, performing the great works of classical music with such outstanding

musicians, bearing witness to the generous support by Jackson Hole's tremendous community – that is the veritable source of the unique alchemy to be experienced at the Grand Teton Music Festival.'

The 2018 season takes place between July 3 and August 18, and simultaneously looks both to the past and to the future.

Leonard Bernstein's centenary

takes centre stage with soloists that include violinists Leila Josefowicz and Julian Rachlin, pianists Daniil Trifonov, Kirill Gerstein and Olga Kern, cellist Johannes Moser and composer/bassist Edgar Meyer, along with Broadway luminary Audra McDonald headlining the festival's annual gala concert. The young Syrian-American Kareem Roustom has been invited as composer-in-residence, while a new festival commission from former Cleveland Composer Fellow Sean Shepherd receives its world premiere. Visit gtmf.org for the complete schedule and to buy tickets.

Aspen Music Festival and School

The upscale boutiques, gourmet coffee shops and mouth-watering dining options engulfing downtown Aspen belie this venerable municipality's roots as a mining camp founded in the 1880s during Colorado's Silver Boom. However, the Aspen we know today started coming into its own in the mid-20th century, when Aspen Mountain became a skiing resort and Chicago



The open-sided Benedict Music Tent, the setting for almost daily concerts

industrialist Walter Paepcke began to buy up and develop properties. What started in 1949 as a successful two-week celebration of the German poet Goethe's bicentennial soon materialised into an annual summer music programme. The first official class in 1951 comprised 183 students, with Igor Stravinsky on hand as composer and conductor. Over the decades, Aspen's

international roster of teachers, students, alumni and artists have constituted a veritable who's who of 20th- and early 21st-century music luminaries.

During the summer, concerts take place almost daily in the main Benedict Music Tent, an acoustically superb venue characterised by its open sides and curving roof constructed from Teflon-coated fibreglass. Most chamber music concerts, solo recitals and public masterclasses are held next door in the 500-seat Joan and Irving Harris Concert Hall that opened in 1993. By contrast, the historic Wheeler Opera House, a long-time festival partner, has been in business since 1889 and features a wide array of professional and community events from concerts and stand-up comedy to discussions and lectures.

The Aspen Festival's infrastructure and mission have evolved over the years. 'In the 1990s, Aspen had grown almost by

accretion, with more than a thousand students,' says composer/administrator Alan Fletcher, who came to Aspen in March 2006 as President and CEO. 'It became necessary to scale back to around 600 students and adjust the size and direction of the faculty accordingly, in order for everyone to fully benefit from teaching and performing opportunities at the highest levels.' One significant development was the completion of the \$80m Matthew and Carolyn Bucksbaum Campus in 2013, situated on 38 acres amidst woodlands, spruce-covered foothills and two man-made ponds.

All of the buildings can be easily accessed by foot, and include state-of-the-art practice rooms, orchestral rehearsal halls, teaching studios, administrative offices and an impressive library. While important commercial recordings have stemmed from live Aspen concerts, such as the Emerson

Quartet's DG Shostakovich cycle, most concerts and talks are recorded for future broadcast on National Public Radio and local affiliates, with hundreds of items from recent and past seasons available for streaming in partnership with the website instantencore.com.

The year's event, from June 28 to August 19, marks Aspen's 70th season with an overall theme focused on works by Parisian composers and inspired by the French capital. Three mini-festivals showcase distinctive creative threads: Impressionism (1860-1910), Diaghilev Ballet Russes composers (1909-29), and a survey of Nadia Boulanger's American composition students. Other highlights include Daniil Trifonov performing his own piano concerto and a contemporary music programme from violinist Augustin Hadelich, plus a collaboration with pianist Joyce Yang and the Aspen Sante Fe Ballet. Visit aspenmusicfestival.com for details.

Tippet Rise Art Center

One of America's newest and most unique classical music festivals takes place near the south-central town of Fishtail, Montana, on an 11,500-acre working sheep and cattle ranch, north of Yellowstone National Park and buffered by the Beartooth Mountains. The Tippet Rise Art Center, which opened in 2016, is the brainchild of artists/philanthropists Peter and Cathy Halstead, who began the process of purchasing six contiguous ranches back in 2009 for the purpose of creating an environment that enables both performing artists and the listening public to experience and absorb the subtle and profound connections between nature, visual art and music.

'We always were inspired by large spaces containing sculpture, like New York's Storm King,' says Peter Halstead, 'as well as how nature could shape a musical situation. We once heard pianist Ivo Pogorelich in an outdoor theatre where only the stage was covered. It started pouring with rain, so the pianist invited the audience up on stage with him, and it was like he was making us a part of the performance.'

Tippet Rise holds concerts in several intimate venues. Upon entering the grounds, the Olivier Music Barn, with its timber frame and pitched roof, appears like a gentle surprise. Its architectural and



The Tiara Acoustic Shell, one of Tippet Rise's unique performance spaces

acoustic design were in some respects inspired by Snape Maltings, the Halsteads' favourite concert hall, although the latter's 832-seat capacity is a far cry from the Olivier's 150 seats. More unusual, however, is the Tiara Acoustic Shell. At first glance it looks a little rough and ready: a bare-bones portable stage with a rudimentary covering held up by plywood sticks, plopped down in the middle of nowhere. Yet the combination of an expansive surrounding landscape and remarkable reverberation gives new meaning to the term 'psycho-acoustic.'

All concerts are painstakingly documented in high-definition video and audio. Items from the inaugural 2016 season appear on a double-CD release in Pentatone's Oxingale Series (including artists such as Yevgeny Sudbin, Stephen Hough and others), while an ample representation of live performances can be found on YouTube. Such high technical care extends to the upkeep of the Art Center's dozen

Steinway pianos, all chosen with care by Peter Halstead, a pianist in his own right. This writer (also a pianist in his own right) was particularly smitten by the lovingly restored Steinway concert grand, CD-18, formerly owned by Vladimir Horowitz and later acquired by Eugene Istomin.

The 2018 season, which runs from July 6 to September 8, includes the Tippet Rise debuts of pianists Wu Han,

Gabriel Kahane, Ingrid Fliter and Julien Brocal, cellists Johannes Moser and David Finckel, violinist Vadim Gluzman, and the Calidore String Quartet, along with the return of artists from past seasons, plus the premiere of the second in a series of three commissioned works by composer Aaron Jay Kernis. Happily, the Halsteads' lofty artistic ideals translate into a warm, familial atmosphere, created by the combination of the reasonable ticket prices, welcoming communal dining area and genial canyon tours to spontaneous events that couldn't happen anywhere else. For example, after giving a substantial evening concert, violinist Caroline Goulding led a small group of friends, colleagues and journalists up to an Alexander Calder sculpture. Barely illuminated by the moonlight, she played unaccompanied Bach for the simple joy of it. Seating is limited, and reservations are strongly advised; visit tippetrise.org for schedule and ticket information. **G**

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NORTH AMERICA FESTIVALS

Aspen Music Festival and School

June 28 – August 19

Aspen presents more than 400 events ranging from orchestral concerts and recitals to fully staged operas, and a huge educational programme of masterclasses and family events. This year's themes are the Bernstein centenary, American students of Nadia Boulanger, and Paris. Bernstein highlights include music director Robert Spano conducting Symphony No 2, *The Age of Anxiety*, with pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet. Jonathan Biss's three-year Beethoven sonatas cycle, launched at Aspen, also continues. Visiting artists include Garrick Ohlsson, Yuja Wang and Lise de la Salle, Alicia Weilerstein, Nicholas McGegan, and Daniel Hope and Augustin Hadelich.

aspenmusicfestival.com

Blossom Music Festival

July 3 – September 2

The Cleveland Orchestra's annual summer festival takes place at Ohio's Blossom Music Center, in the beautiful grounds of Cuyahoga Valley National Park, and this year's festival celebrates the venue's 50th birthday. Programme details weren't yet available as we went to press, so keep an eye on the website.

clevelandorchestra.com

Bravo! Vail

June 21 – August 2

A combination of symphonic and chamber concerts, plus jazz and pops, this festival is situated amid the awe-inspiring scenery of the Rocky Mountains' Vail Valley. Four international orchestras make the festival their home this summer: the Academy of St Martin in the Fields, the Dallas Symphony Orchestra, the

Philadelphia Orchestra and the New York Philharmonic.

bravovail.org

Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music

July 29 – August 12

America's longest-running festival of new orchestral music celebrates its 56th season and the second season of its new music director, Cristian Măcelaru. Both pre-eminent and emerging composers, an orchestra of dedicated professional musicians, and renowned guest artists from around the globe give voice to works which are rarely more than a year or two old. With a professional training workshop for conductors and composers in their early careers, open rehearsals, educational programming, and a street fair showcasing local performers and artists, the festival offers dozens of opportunities for meaningful engagement.

cabrillomusic.org

Caramoor

June 16 – July 29

This seven-week-long, multi-genre music festival is based at the historic 90-acre Caramoor estate in Katonah, Westchester, with its Italianate architecture and picnic-friendly gardens. The focus for 2018 is on new music, with works by 22 living composers, and with women composers featuring strongly; there's also increased family programming. Opening and closing the festival are the resident Orchestra of St Luke's; new music ensembles Kronos Quartet, Sô Percussion and The Knights visit too. A highlight of a free day of events is John Luther Adams's monumental out-of-doors percussion piece *Inuksuit*, while

a new music highlight is the Verona Quartet premiering a festival commission from Julia Adolphe. There is also an All-Bernstein centenary programme led by Broadway director Ted Sperling.

caramoor.org

Carmel Bach Festival

July 14-28

This California festival is under the artistic direction of Paul Goodwin and takes place in the village of Carmel-by-the-Sea and surrounding areas, with concerts in Carmel's Sunset Theatre and the weekly main choral event in historic Carmel Mission Basilica. The festival has its own resident orchestra made up of modern and period instruments (the only one of its kind in the US). The 2018 opening night programme includes Bach's *St Matthew Passion* performed on period instruments at Baroque pitch for the first time in Festival history; the concert's vocal soloists include Mhairi Lawson and Rufus Müller. Another highlight is Buxtehude's *Membra Jesu Nostri*, at the Basilica, while orchestral concerts include the suite from *On the Town*, by Leonard Bernstein.

bachfestival.org

Chelsea Music Festival

June 8-16

In its ninth annual summer season, Chelsea Music Festival takes place in Lower Manhattan with the theme 'Bach 333': JS Bach's 333rd birthday. Musicians, visual artists and chefs explore the profound output of his work and play off of the ideas of variation, the number three, rhythm and transformation. Events over the nine days feature classical, jazz and contemporary music in evening concerts, lectures and family events.

chelseamusicfestival.org

Festival Opera Québec

July 24 – August 6

This opera festival showcases the best of international and Québec artists of today and the future. Among the offerings for 2018 are Robert Lepage's staging of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, Offenbach's *La belle Hélène*, and a concert version of *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

festivaloperaquebec.com

Glimmerglass Festival

July 7 – August 25

The Glimmerglass Festival presents four mainstage productions of opera and musical theatre every summer in its lakeside theatre in the heart of central New York. Bernstein's *West Side Story* is the first of the 2018 productions: a co-production with Houston Grand Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago

featuring the original Jerome Robbins choreography. Next there's E Loren Meeker's new production of Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, and Francesca Zambello's production of Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* conducted by the Festival's music director, Joseph Colaneri. The final mainstage production observes the end of the First World War with Kevin Puts' and Mark Campbell's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Silent Night*, telling the story of the Christmas Truce of 1914; Tomer Zvulun, artistic director of Atlanta Opera, makes his Glimmerglass debut as director.

glimmerglass.org

Grand Teton Music Festival

July 3 – August 18

Founded in 1962, this seven-week festival takes place in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, at the foothills of the breathtaking Teton Mountain Range. This year it celebrates Leonard Bernstein's centenary with soloists including violinists Leila Josefowicz and Julian Rachlin, pianists Daniil Trifonov, Kirill Gerstein and Olga Kern, bassist Edgar Meyer, and cellist Johannes Moser. Music director Donald Runnicles leads the Festival Orchestra, formed of top musicians from America's best orchestras.

gtmf.org

Interlochen Arts Camp

June 23 – August 6

The Michigan-based Interlochen Arts Camp combines concerts with an educational programme. Highlights of the season for its World Youth Symphony Orchestra include Brahms's Symphony No 4 conducted by Colorado Symphony Music Director Brett Mitchell. Other 2018 guest conductors include Florida Orchestra and Mainly Mozart Music Director Michael Francis, Interlochen alumnus and Santa Fe Orchestra principal conductor Guillermo Figueroa, Shepherd School of Music orchestral conducting professor Larry Rachleff, and Buffalo Philharmonic and Virginia Symphony Orchestra music director JoAnn Falletta. The 2018 Valade Concertmasters, who attend rehearsals and offer advice on technical and artistic aspects of performance, include LA Phil first violinist Martin Chiffrou, Atlanta Symphony concertmaster David Coucheron, and Interlochen alumni Margaret Batjer and Jeff Thayer.

interlochen.org

June in Buffalo

June 4-10

Presented and hosted by the University at Buffalo's Department

HIGHLIGHT EVENT

Bard SummerScape

June 28 – August 19

Taking place at Bard College in New York's Hudson Valley, with many performances given in the Frank Gehry-designed Richard B Fisher Center, this multi-arts festival's major musical offerings take place during the Bard Music Festival, which covers its final two weekends. This year is themed 'Rimsky Korsakov and His World'. More widely across the festival, two major anniversaries are celebrated. Firstly Bernstein: highlights include the festival's opening production – Christopher Alden's stage adaptation of JM Barrie's *Peter Pan*, which features music and lyrics by the composer. Then there's the 75th anniversary of the publication of TS Eliot's *Four Quartets*, marked by the world premiere of a festival commission by Kaija Saariaho, choreographed by Pam Tanowitz and played by The Knights.

fishercenter.bard.edu/summerscape



Gehry's Fisher Center hosts several concerts

of Music with the Robert and Carol Morris Center for 21st-Century Music, and under the direction of David Felder, June in Buffalo offers an intensive schedule of composition seminars, lectures, workshops and open rehearsals as well as concerts open to the general public and critics. Each of the invited composers has one piece performed during the festival. Among this year's senior composers joining Felder are John Harbison and Liza Lim. Resident ensembles include Ensemble Signal and Boston Modern Orchestra Project. Special guest for this year is Irvine Arditti, first violinist of the Arditti Quartet.

music21c.org

Marlboro Music

July 14 - August 12

With pianist Mitsuko Uchida as Music Director, this rural Vermont chamber festival gives young professionals the fantastic opportunity to collaborate with established musicians in a mentoring relationship. After three weeks of daily rehearsals, the artists present the results of their collaborations in public concerts.

marlboromusic.org

Mostly Mozart Festival

July 12 - August 12

A summertime tradition in New York, this festival run by the Lincoln Center always offers big names and an array of different styles and venues. Keep an eye on the website for programme details.

mostlymozart.org

Music Academy of the West

June 18 - August 12

One of the US's most prominent summer schools and festivals, the Music Academy of the West auditions top students from around the world, who then spend summer performing and studying with a faculty that includes leading soloists and principal players from major international orchestras, all next to the beach. James Conlon conducts and James Darrah directs this year's opera, Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, and Stéphane Denève will make his debut with the Music Academy of the West Orchestra in the historic Granada Theatre in downtown Santa Barbara. Soloists and chamber groups paying visits this summer include pianist Jeremy Denk and the Takács Quartet.

musicacademy.org

Music@Menlo Chamber Music Festival & Institute

July 13 - August 4

Under the artistic directorship of David Finckel and Wu Han, this festival is based in Menlo School in Atherton, California, with concerts taking place in the surrounding area. Creative Capitals is the theme for 2018, focused on London, Paris,

St Petersburg, Leipzig, Berlin, Budapest, and Vienna. Among the usual guest artists and young performers, mainstage concerts and masterclasses, 2018 sees a new Overture Series featuring talented Chamber Music Institute musicians alongside mainstage artists. One particular performance highlight will be the festival's opening 'London' concert, with Vaughan Williams from tenor Kang Wang and pianist Gilbert Kalish. Meanwhile, a 'Berlin' highlight features festival-debut cellist David Requiro alongside pianist Gilles Vonsattel in Beethoven's F major Cello Sonata, as well as Mendelssohn's Second Piano Trio with violinist Arnaud Sussmann, and Wu Han and Finckel.

musicatmenlo.org

Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival

July 15 - August 20

Set against the backdrop of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the festival presents six weeks of concerts, recitals, masterclasses, youth concerts and open rehearsals. Alan Gilbert returns as artist-in-residence this year, he plays the violin in Faure's C minor Piano Quartet as well as in a Baroque concert featuring his wife, cellist Kasja William-Olsson, sister-violinist Jennifer Gilbert, and her husband, viola player Harvey de Souza. Among those making their festival debuts this year are the New York Philharmonic String Quartet, the Danish String Quartet and the Zebra Trio. There are also world premieres by Alexander Goehr, Magnus Lindberg and the young American composer Max Grafe.

santafechambermusic.com

Ojai Music Festival

June 7-10

A different music director curates this southern California festival each year, and for this festival it's the turn of high-flying Moldovan violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja. One highlight includes the American premiere of *Bye Bye Beethoven*, a staged concert conceptualised by Kopatchinskaja who, along with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra, performs the music of Ives, Cage, Bach and Kurtág, plus the Beethoven Violin Concerto. Other highlights are Kopatchinskaja playing a programme of works by the Russian composer Galina Ustvolskaya with pianist Markus Hinterhäuser; a free community event in which members of the Mahler Chamber Orchestra perform Berio's *Sequenzas* for solo instruments; and the much-anticipated world premiere of a festival commission by Michael Hersch, performed by members of the MCO with sopranos Ah Young Hong and Kiera Duffy.

ojafestival.org

HIGHLIGHT EVENT

Ravinia Festival

June 1 - September 16

Summer residency of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1936, the Ravinia Festival is based in Highland Park, Illinois, and is North America's oldest outdoor music festival. This year sees the launch of a two-season centennial tribute to Leonard Bernstein, with performances of the compositions he penned, films he scored, composers he championed, and artists he influenced. Central to Ravinia's celebration will be the two-year appointment of Marin Alsop - one of Bernstein's final protégés - as the first musical curator in the festival's 113-year history. Other conductors appearing this year are Andy Einhorn, Emil de Cou, Ken-David Masur and Michael Stern. Visiting artists and ensembles, meanwhile, include pianists Gil Kalish and Peter Serkin, soprano Nadine Sierra, mezzo Frederica von Stade, and the Emerson, Takács and Juilliard string quartets.

ravinia.org



Ravinia's open-air Pavilion hosts the Chicago SO

Spoletto Festival May

May 25 - June 10

Charleston, South Carolina, is the host town for this famous multi-arts festival. Opera highlights for 2018 include the US premiere of Andrea Cigni's production of Donizetti's *Pia de Tolomei*. Also performed is the US premiere of Liza Lim's opera *Tree of Codes*, conducted by John Kennedy and directed by Ong Keng Sen. Concert highlights meanwhile include Steven Sloane conducting the Spoleto Festival Orchestra in Mozart's Piano Concerto No 15 with soloist Pedja Muzijevic, and Mahler's Symphony No 1. Among the dance offerings are Miami City Ballet with a programme dedicated to the choreography of Jerome Robbins titled 'The Art of the Pas de Deux'.

spoletousa.org

Tanglewood

June 15 - September 2

Tanglewood is the summer home of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and this season its major focus is on the Bernstein centenary, celebrating his life and legacy as a composer, conductor and educator, and his contribution to the Tanglewood Festival between 1940 and 1990. A highlight is the festival's final gala Bernstein Centennial Celebration, which features a monster-sized line-up of international names: conductors appearing along with BSO Music Director Andris Nelsons include John Williams, Christoph Eschenbach and Michael Tilson Thomas; soloists include violinist Midori, cellists Yo-Yo Ma and Kian Soltani, singers Nadine Sierra and Thomas Hampson, and Broadway stars Jessica Vosk and Tony Yazbeck; plus, joining the BSO and Tanglewood Festival Chorus are an array of orchestral musicians

from other ensembles including the New York Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Israel Philharmonic and the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra. Beyond Bernstein's music, one opera highlight includes a semi-staged performance of Puccini's *La bohème* with a cast including Kristine Opolais.

bso.org

Tippet Rise

July 6 - September 8

Now entering its third season, Tippet Rise is based near Montana's Beartooth Mountains. Its main concert venue is the 150-seat Olivier Music Barn, but there are also outdoor performances at striking sculptural structures. 2018 debuts include pianists Wu Han, Gabriel Kahane, Ingrid Fliter and Julien Brocal, cellists David Finckel and Johannes Moser, violinist Vadim Gluzman, and the Calidore String Quartet. Returning artists include the Dover Quartet and pianists Yevgeny Sudbin, Jenny Chen, Jeffrey Kahane, Anne-Marie McDermott and Pedja Muzijevic. A highlight of the outdoor recital strand promises to be violinist Caroline Goulding with a varied programme ranging from Georg Philipp Telemann to Philip Glass.

tippetrise.org

REST OF THE WORLD

Singapore International Piano Festival

June 7-10

Hosted by Victoria Concert Hall, this festival features four recitalists over four consecutive evenings; this year they are Dénes Várjon, Jeremy Denk, Seong-Jin Cho and Dang Thai Son.

sso.org.sg/singapore-international-piano-festival

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GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Geoffrey Norris applauds a magnificent new recording from Mariss Jansons showcasing two of Rachmaninov's finest scores



Rachmaninov

The Bells, Op 35^a. Symphonic Dances, Op 45^b

^aTatiana Pavlovskaya *sop* ^aOleg Dolgov *ten*

^aAlexey Markov *bar* Bavarian Radio Symphony

^aChorus and Orchestra / Mariss Jansons

BR-Klassik © 900154 (74' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Herkulessaal, Munich,

^aJanuary 14 & 15, 2016; ^bJanuary 26 & 27, 2017

This superlative performance of Rachmaninov's choral symphony *The Bells* is one of those stratospherically accomplished, 'cosmic' ones that Jansons says he is always trying to attain. For a long time my benchmark as a conductor of *The Bells* has been Evgeny Svetlanov. The fact that it was the last work he performed in London shortly before his death in 2002 lends his association with the music an additional, poignant dimension, and the recording of that event with the BBC Symphony Orchestra transmits the passion, intensity and radiant glow that were qualities forever associated with a Svetlanov concert. His 1979 recording with the USSR Symphony Orchestra, which was my top choice in a *Gramophone* Collection (A/09), is similarly a lasting reminder of his interpretative power and expressive flexibility. Call me obsessive, but I have just found in Moscow a previously unpublished live recording which Svetlanov made in 1958 in the Conservatoire's Great Hall (SMCCD0157). Well restored and remastered, it is notably quicker than Svetlanov's later versions but it is still a performance which, as Pushkin said in another context, 'breathes and reeks of Russia', with a positively diabolical third movement of alarum bells.

Like Svetlanov, Jansons has Rachmaninov in his very soul;



'Jansons's command of rubato and the music's ebb and flow of dynamic and pacing is innate, inspiring and spot-on'

but he is also able to capitalise on his remarkable ear for colour, clarity and atmosphere, coupled with his distinctive energy and probing depth of emotional understanding. His Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, captured at

Munich concerts in January 2016, is at its peak; the choir is well drilled, disciplined and red-blooded in the Russian text; and the three soloists are impeccable. Oleg Dolgov brings a lyrical, seductive tenor voice to the first movement; Tatiana Pavlovskaya is enchanting in the second, secure in intonation at that perilous climax where Rachmaninov has the soprano sing a high G while the orchestral harmony is luring her towards an A flat or an F; and Alexey Markov has a sonorous, burnished quality ideal for the finale. Jansons is well known and acclaimed for the detail that he can bring out of a score, and such is the case here with all sorts of subtle emphases and shifts of dynamics that highlight, for example, an unnerving stab of harmony or, in general, the panoply of bell-like sonorities that Rachmaninov achieves with only the rarest recourse to bells themselves.

Jansons is not averse to tweaking the tempo markings, for instance at the end of the first movement: according to the score, the *Meno mosso*, *Maestoso* marking at fig 25 (5'24") holds good until the end of the movement, but Jansons puts his foot on the accelerator at 5'46" in a way that sounds obtrusive first time round because you are not expecting it but which you get used to on repeated listening. In the great scheme of things it is not going to lessen the impact of the recording as a whole. The sustained, proper *Lento* of the second movement is sublimely judged, more or less on a par in timing with Svetlanov in 1958 and 2002, though Svetlanov exhibited an uncanny ability to reveal and exploit the music's tensile capacity with a much more spacious reading in 1979. Jansons's third movement bristles with terror, the chorus excelling in those exacting chromatic vocal



Mariss Jansons directs with his trademark lucidity and luminosity



Rhythmic bite and echoes of nostalgia: the Bavarian Radio Symphony Chorus and Orchestra excel in Rachmaninov

parts, the orchestra contributing the shivers and bronze bell images of Edgar Allan Poe as reimagined by Konstantin Balmont, with notable thuds of foreboding from the double basses and bass drum at 5'18". Here, and in the *Lento lugubre* of the finale, Jansons's command of rubato and the music's ebb and flow of dynamic and pacing is innate, inspiring and spot-on.

Jansons has already recorded the *Symphonic Dances* with the St Petersburg Philharmonic and with the Royal Concertgebouw and, exceptional though those discs are, this latest performance with the BRSO, recorded live in January last year, is even more finely honed, more lithe in its muscle and graced throughout with Jansons's trademark lucidity and luminosity. The orchestral timbre pits

freshness and crispness against mellow warmth, mixing the two in an amalgam that ideally suits the music's rhythmic bite and echoes of nostalgia. The joy of discs in general is that you can own more than one; I still treasure Svetlanov's way with both these works (Regis has an excellent 1986 live performance of the *Symphonic Dances*). But this new Jansons coupling, lustrously recorded, is of such outstanding quality that it is in a class of its own. **G**

The Bells – selected comparisons:

USSR SO, Svetlanov (5/81⁸) (REGI) RRC1144

BBC SO, Svetlanov (ICA) ICAC5069

Symphonic Dances – selected comparisons:

St Petersburg PO, Jansons

(12/93⁸) (EMI/WARN) 500885-2 or 2564 62782-7

RCO, Jansons (2/06) (RCO) RCO05004

USSR SO, Svetlanov (REGI) RRC1178

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Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Orchestral



Jeremy Nicholas on Denis Matsuev's mixed Prokofiev and Rachmaninov:

'Matsuev's abrasive vehemence pays dividends in a performance of Prokofiev that captures the music's sardonic character' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 62**



Mark Pullinger enjoys Stravinsky's Rite from Krzysztof Urbanski:

'Urbanski's bassoonist begins with the longest held opening note I've heard, before coiling into a truly mournful wail' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 66**

JS Bach

Violin Concertos – BWV1041;
BWV1042; BWV1052; BWV1060*

Frank Peter Zimmermann,

*Serge Zimmermann vns Berlin Baroque Soloists
Hänssler Classic (C) HC17046 (61' • DDD)



Frank Peter Zimmermann has slipped in a couple of less predictable

offerings for this Bach violin concertos programme, because while he opens with the famous A minor, BWV1041, and E major, BWV 1042, neither of the D minor concertos occupying the disc's second half is the famous 'Double'. Instead he's given us a pair which survive in manuscript as harpsichord concertos from Bach's Leipzig years but which probably began life as melody-instrument concertos written during the Cöthen years, when he wrote the other two. So, first and most interestingly of all, we have BWV1052, a work now almost indelibly established as a harpsichord concerto and barely recorded as anything other. Then we have BWV1060, which does enjoy a small parallel life as a double melody-instrument concerto but largely for violin and oboe rather than for the equally possible two violins that Zimmermann serves us here.

Tools-wise we're slightly outside of the norm too, because Zimmermann's Strad is on a modern rather than a period set-up, and likewise the Berliner Barock Solisten – members of the Berlin Philharmonic – albeit with period-appropriate bows. It may come as a small surprise, then, that the overall sound of these bright, lively performances is one of absolutely precise, polished perfection. Intonation, articulation, attack, rhythm, metre, you name it, it's all immaculately neat and silky, whether you're concentrating on the sprightly detached ensemble-playing or on Zimmermann himself (and his son Serge for the BWV1060 double) with his elegant little tucked ornamentations.

In fact the whole feels almost a bit too perfect at times, especially if you compare all this cool elegance to the gutsy oomph and greater metric freedom heard on Andrew Manze and Rachel Podger's 1997 recording with the AAM, their BWV1060 in particular suggesting an existential struggle against Bach's D minor darkness. Likewise, while there's not much violin-shaped competition on the BWV1052 front, my money's still on Amandine Beyer's 2005 reading with Gli Incogniti.

If you like your Bach couched in smoothly precise perfection then this is for you. If you prefer something with a bit more of a freewheeling kick about it – and indeed period instruments – I'd stick with Manze and Podger. **Charlotte Gardner**

BWV1041, 1042 & 1060 – selected comparison:

Podger, AAM, Manze (4/97⁸) (HARM) HMA195 7155

BWV1041, 1042 & 1052 – selected comparison:

Beyer, Incogniti (10/07) (ZZT) ZZT070501

Bartók

Violin Concertos – No 1, Sz36; No 2, Sz112

Renaud Capuçon vns London Symphony Orchestra / François-Xavier Roth

Erato (C) 9029 57080-7; (C) (C) 9029 56992-5
(60' • DDD)



Writing in the 2013 Awards issue regarding Patricia Kopatchinskaja's

often striking version of Bartók's Second Concerto (*Gramophone* Recording of the Year for 2013), Philip Clark observed how 'performances of the Bartók ... have tended to be judged as "folksy" or "modernist"; for Kopatchinskaja and Eötvös [the conductor on the recording] they're one and the same'. A fair assessment, I'd say, Kopatchinskaja's rhapsodising approach returning the music to its folk roots, while Eötvös stands by as a more formal commentator. If you want to sample, try the opening minutes of either the first or the third movements. Their recording eschews the now

occasional decision to use Bartók's purely orchestral first ending (Mullova with Salonen and Faust with Harding prefer that option) but they certainly conspire to have the music jump out at you. Faust takes a similar route, at least for part of the journey, whereas the more drily recorded Barnabás Kelemen with Zoltán Kocsis conducting, although thrilling in the way they attack the music, are less wilfully individualistic, and Thomas Zehetmair with Iván Fischer conducting are awash with colour throughout.

With Renaud Capuçon and François-Xavier Roth the issue is less a blend of folksy and modernist than modernist and romantic. Capuçon, like Mullova, makes Bartók's musical path sound warmingly familiar, a centrist approach which, were it not for Roth's meticulously attentive approach to the orchestral score, would have you concentrating exclusively on the often dreamy violin line. But time and again while listening I was drawn to this or that salient detail in Bartók's orchestration: the clarinet behind the trilling soloist at 5'56" into the first movement, for example, while the perky LSO woodwinds make a real play for the jazzy episodes soon afterwards, where Capuçon jumps in with some brilliantly dispatched passagework. And what a sense of infinite sadness Capuçon brings to the opening of the second movement, mellow and seamlessly drawn: this really is beautiful violin-playing.

The opening of the finale is a little formal in comparison with Kopatchinskaja, Kelemen, Zehetmair and Faust but elsewhere a compensating sense of emotional engagement keeps the music vibrant and communicative. And there's James Ehnes (who usefully couples the two concertos with the Viola Concerto), Arabella Steinbacher and a whole host of golden oldies – so much excellence to choose from.

As to the youthful First Concerto, with its adoring *Andante sostenuto* and dizzily excited *Allegro giocoso*, Capuçon plays the lover's role (this was



A blend of modernist and romantic: Renaud Capuçon plays Bartók's two violin concertos with the LSO and François-Xavier Roth

a love poem for the violinist Stefi Geyer) to perfection. Whether I'd choose it as a coupling for the Second Concerto in preference to the two magnificent violin Rhapsodies that Kelemen and Kocsis opt for (with variants) is open to question. That Hungaroton CD would still be my first choice but the considerate and musically persuasive partnership of Capuçon and Roth should certainly take its place among top recommendations for both concertos, especially as the sound is extremely well balanced. **Rob Cowan**

Violin Concertos – selected comparisons:

Ebnes, BBC PO, Noseda (11/11) (CHAN) CHAN10690

Faust, Swedish RSO, Harding

(A/13) (HARM) HMC90 2146

Zehebair, Budapest Fest Orch, I Fischer (BRIL) 9436

Violin Concerto No 2 – selected comparisons:

Mullova, Los Angeles PO, Salonen

(5/98) (DECC) 478 6713DC3*

Kelemen, Hungarian Nat PO, Kocsis

(10/11) (HUNG) HSACD32509

Kopatchinskaja, Frankfurt RSO, Eitrövs

(12/12) (NAIV) V5285

Brahms

Two Piano Concertos

Adam Laloum *pf* Berlin Radio Symphony

Orchestra / Kazuki Yamada

Sony Classical © ② 88985 46081-2 (96' • DDD)



The French pianist Adam Laloum is Sony's newest young artist on the block,

signed in 2016. Seven years earlier he won the Clara Haskil Competition (often a marker of major musical talent). Certainly the repertoire choice for his debut recording on the label is bold – reminiscent of another Sony signing, a certain Mr Levit. The comparisons don't end there, either, for they were both born in 1987 and both are clearly being marketed as musicians of entirely serious intent, Laloum pictured with his eyes cast away from the camera. Happily, that seriousness is borne out by the playing in the two Brahms concertos.

The Sony engineers have placed the piano at the front of the sound picture, so there's never the slightest danger Laloum will not be heard. He's an artist who relishes the lyrical side of his chosen instrument, which is clear from his very first entry in the D minor Concerto and from then on in, with Laloum insinuating himself into the orchestral textures and accompanying figures with a naturalness

that betrays his love of chamber music. But he can be bold as well as gentle: his octaves have power without sounding acerbic, and trills are sternly glinting. Occasionally I wanted more of a push through this mighty movement, such as Paul Lewis finds in his thrilling account, compared to which Laloum sounds almost too controlled. But his real clarity of texture is refreshing and the final bars have superb confidence. The slow movement is finely honed, though Laloum doesn't yet have quite as much to say as Lewis or Hough. But his finale dances with real spirit, and he has fire in his belly where the music demands it.

The Second Concerto has many good things in it – the Scherzo superbly combining energy and a lift that gives it a real one-in-a-bar feel, compared to which Moog sounds like a bit of a speed merchant. And the tempo of the slow movement means that it sounds entirely unfussy (unlike Moog's overly steady account), the cello solo unfolding with great naturalness, while the solo oboe is caressing without over-egging matters. Laloum is at the centre of things yet never overly dominant and the close of the *Andante* is very beautifully done. Again, Laloum can't yet match the rapture of Freire but there's time for that. The finale

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is as crisp as newly laundered linen, though just occasionally I hankered after a little more playfulness. But certainly an impressive achievement. **Harriet Smith**

Piano Concertos – selected comparisons:

Hough, Salzburg Mozarteum Orch, Wigglesworth

(1/14) (HYPE) CDA67961

Freire, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orch, Chailly

(9/06) (DECC) 475 7637DX2

Piano Concerto No 1 – selected comparison:

Lewis, Swedish RSO, Harding

(5/16) (HARM) HMC90 2191

Piano Concerto No 2 – selected comparison:

Moog, Deutsche Radio Philharmonie/Milton

(2/18) (ONYX) ONYX4169

Brahms

Four Symphonies

Scottish Chamber Orchestra / Robin Ticciati

Linn ② CKD601 (152' • DDD)



On paper, Robin Ticciati's new set of Brahms's symphonies bears a striking

resemblance to the Scottish Chamber Orchestra's previous recording with Sir Charles Mackerras (Telarc, 10/97). Both cycles are closely modelled on the performing tradition of the court orchestra at Meiningen, where Brahms conducted the premiere of his Fourth Symphony. No surprise, then, that the interpretative decisions Robin Ticciati enumerates in his booklet note are nearly identical to those laid out in Mackerras's, including the deployment of Viennese horns and small-bore trombones, and the same configuration of 34 strings who play with 'the notion of vibrato as ornament'.

In practice, however, the interpretations sound nothing alike. Mackerras's recording is reassuringly sonorous, despite the smaller complement of strings; Ticciati's is lean and quite dazzlingly transparent. Listening with score in hand, I marvelled at the conductor's meticulous observance of Brahms's markings. Nearly every instruction regarding dynamics, phrasing and articulation is accounted for. Impressive, too, is the orchestra's ability to render these details with such a fine balance of precision and expressive brio – evidence of Ticciati's salutary impact on the orchestra during his nine years as music director.

The woodwinds – inevitably spotlighted in such a compact ensemble – are marvellously characterful. Sample any of the slow movements, as their playing is consistently and memorably affectionate in all four. The brightly burnished brass are

clearly mindful of the delicacy required in an orchestra of this size. And the strings? On the Telarc set, there were quite a few ragged moments and a sense they were sometimes striving to project a larger sonority than was practicable. Here, however, their precision and unanimity are beyond reproach. Listen at 8'00" in the *Allegro* of the First Symphony, where they whip up a maelstrom through frothing, spitting articulation. And then how nobly sung and evenly balanced their corporate tone is in the finale's anthemic tune at 4'14".

Perhaps the most conspicuous difference between Mackerras's and Ticciati's Brahms is in the matter of vibrato. Both officially subscribe to Joachim's dictum that vibrato be applied only where demanded by expressive necessity but it's Ticciati who goes full tilt. The opening movement of the First Symphony sounds an awful lot like Beethoven played on period instruments. It's not the Brahms I grew up hearing but it's thoroughly compelling and often downright thrilling. I'm less convinced in the intermezzo-like third movement, despite the lovely wind-playing, because it strikes me that there are places where 'expressive necessity' is overlooked. Take the lovely violin line at 3'16", marked *molto dolce*, which lies pale and flat in Ticciati's reading; Andris Nelson has the Boston violins make this little line take my breath away (BSO Classics, 9/17).

I'm more troubled, however, by Ticciati's tendency to allow his focus on detail to impede the music's large-scale phraseology – that fabled 'long line'. In the finale of the Second, for instance, he appears so intent on following the articulation markings that the phrases end up sounding stitched together rather than flowing easily, as they do so joyfully on Paavo Berglund's account with the Chamber Orchestra of Europe (Ondine, 8/01). Or, to take a more melancholy example: I wish the succession of two-bar phrases in the *Poco allegretto* of the Third added up to more than the sum of their parts; Chailly, for one, weaves these heaves and sighs into an expansive, unified soliloquy. And I simply cannot fathom why Ticciati breaks up the granitic structure of the opening movement of the Fourth with so many (unwritten) pauses – particularly given that his readings of the outer movements of the Third (so much trickier to pull off) are so cogently argued.

Still, there's much to admire in these recordings beyond the stellar playing of the SCO and Linn's state-of-the-art engineering. Ticciati comes to these symphonies with a veritable flood of fresh

ideas. Admittedly, not all are equally convincing, but there's hardly a dull note, either – and that in itself is no small feat in such familiar repertoire. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Bruckner • Wagner

Bruckner Symphony No 4, 'Romantic'

(1878/80 version, ed Nowak)^a

Wagner Lohengrin – Prelude^b

Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra / Andris Nelsons

DG ④ 479 7577GH (79' • DDD)

Recorded live, May 2017



It's apposite that Andris Nelsons's account of Bruckner's Fourth Symphony,

the second release in his cycle of the composer's symphonies, is coupled with the Prelude from Wagner's *Lohengrin*. It's in the symphony's slower and more contemplative passages that his performance is at its best, highlighting the influence of Wagner's music on Bruckner's symphonic language. A notable example is Nelsons's interpretation of the hushed passage at the end of the first movement exposition, the *ppp* playing of the first violins conveying a real sense of rapture before the transition to the development and the magical return of the opening horn call.

Nelsons's interpretation of the *Andante* is on the slow side, taking just over 17 minutes, but his sensitivity to dynamics and tone colour as well as his judicious use of rubato holds the attention. The playing of the violas just after fig C (3'34") is wonderfully sepulchral and the contribution of the principal horn elsewhere is magnificent. The result is highly atmospheric and profoundly moving. Nelsons's care for detail is also impressive in the Scherzo, ensuring that the secondary brass voices are clearly audible in *tutti* passages, rather than disappearing in a blaze of sound as so often happens. I was particularly taken by his unhurriedly pastoral interpretation of the Trio, the playing full of warmth and character. By contrast, Nelsons's reading of the finale is spacious and grand, the playing full of imaginative detail as well as powerfully dramatic in the climactic moments. Once or twice, his approach risks mannerism, the playing descending into near inaudibility followed by an unmarked three-second pause just before fig M (11'29") for example, but otherwise Nelsons offers a faithful and well-structured interpretation of Bruckner's score.

Nelsons's Bayreuth recording of *Lohengrin* (Opus Arte, 10/12) is a remarkable achievement and it's not surprising to find that this performance of the Prelude to Act 1 is everything one could wish for – luminous, transcendental and ideally paced. The recording of both works is detailed and well balanced. Applause has been excised, although some faint audience noise can occasionally be heard in the quieter sections of the symphony. **Christian Hoskins**

Chopin • JS Bach

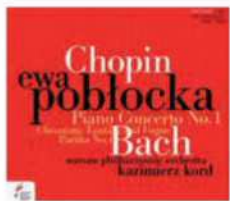
JS Bach 'Chromatic' Fantasy and Fugue, BWV903^a. Partita No 6, BWV830^a

Chopin Piano Concerto No 1, Op 11^b

Ewa Póblocka *pf*^b **Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra** / **Kazimierz Kord**

Fryderyk Chopin Institute © NIFCD054 (72' • DDD)

Recorded live ^b1984, ^a1985



Although Ewa Póblocka has amassed a sizeable discography since the early 1980s, only a handful of releases have crossed my desk, such as her highly acclaimed recording of Panufnik's Piano Concerto with the composer conducting (RCA, 5/92), a fine Grieg Concerto (Conifer, 8/95 – nla) and a terrific recital of Polish songs with the mezzo-soprano Ewa Podleś (CD Accord, 10/99). All the more reason to welcome the live archival performances offered on this disc.

The Chopin E minor Concerto stems from a 1984 concert. It's likely that the presence of an audience and sense of occasion fuels the first movement's bracing momentum. Lyrical passages certainly get their due, yet Póblocka's well-proportioned rubatos and shapely inner voices allow no dead spots; listen, for example, to how she keeps the E major second theme afloat, helped by a strong left-hand presence. Kazimierz Kord and the Warsaw Philharmonic keep up with the soloist every step of the way. The central *Larghetto* also receives a fluent and robust reading, where the decorative piano-writing and beguiling first-desk solos bask in the spotlight as equal partners. The *Vivace* Rondo's breathtaking yet not breakneck speed never lets up, nor does it ever faze Póblocka's dazzling yet intelligently pointed fingerwork. No wonder the audience erupts with applause, and you will too.

The live Bach selections from a 1985 concert make use of pianistic devices such

as hairpin dynamics and impulsive dabs of pedal that may bother acolytes of relatively 'purist' Bach pianists like Tureck, Schiff, Perahia and Hewitt, yet are always tastefully and musically deployed. Póblocka brings a thoughtful sense of narrative to the *Chromatic* Fantasy and begins the Fugue with limpid calm. Unfortunately the textures get thicker, louder and slower as they unfold, but that's true of many live piano performances of this work. The Sixth Partita's highlights include a calm, reposeful Allemande, the Corrente's marvellously crisp *détaché* articulation and a Gavotte whose lighthearted countenance is slightly clouded by the heavy-handed concluding Gigue. Get this disc primarily for the Chopin Concerto. **Jed Distler**

Galliano • Piazzolla • Cresens

Galliano Accordion Concerto, 'Opale' **Piazzolla** Bandoneón Concerto, 'Aconcagua'. Oblivion (arr Cresens). Pedro y Pedro **Albéniz** Cantos de España – Cordoba **Cresens** Nobody Likes an Angry Bunny. La noche anterior **Granados** Danse espagnole No 5

Gwen Cresens *bandoneón/accordion* **Brussels**

Philharmonic Orchestra / **Diego Matheuz**

Warner Classics © 5419 79493-5 (69' • DDD)



Ástor Piazzolla's Bandoneón Concerto has been well-served

on record, most notably by the composer himself in a swaggering 1987 account on Nonesuch. A similarly trenchant performance by French accordionist/composer Richard Galliano made a decade later is nearly as fine (Dreyfus/BMG). Galliano included his own *Concerto Opale* for accordion, closely modelled on Piazzolla's work, and a selection of his charmingly sentimental miniatures on his recording. Now here's Gwen Cresens, revisiting Galliano's programme by offering both the Piazzolla and Galliano concertos (played on bandoneón and accordion, respectively, as Galliano did), and his own mix of shorter works.

Cresens plays the Piazzolla Concerto with tremendous rhythmic élan. I admire how tautly he holds together the lyrical passages while still sounding improvisatory, and also how sensitive he and the Venezuelan conductor Diego Matheuz are to the music's textural variety. Try the passage at 4'56" in the slow movement, where the bandoneón and orchestra's pulsing staccato suggests raindrops, heightening the melancholy atmosphere. The Galliano Concerto is

episodic and sometimes gets stuck in a groove. Galliano tears through the outer movements to electrifying effect in his recording. Cresens is less urgent but, again, makes the most of the motoric rhythms, and lingers more affectionately in the nostalgically bittersweet *Moderato malinconico*.

The shorter pieces are a curious lot. Cresens prefaces the Granados and Albéniz with a flamenco-inflected prelude of his own to create an evocative suite. His enigmatically titled *Nobody Likes an Angry Bunny* is introduced by aching harmonies and continues with a touching, Piazzolla-esque milonga but the denouement is saccharine. And while Cresens makes the most of Piazzolla's conversational *Pedro y Pedro*, his arrangement of *Oblivion* is too garishly coloured. Galliano plays *Oblivion* on his concerto disc, too, but in a version much closer to the sepia-toned spirit of the original. Still, this is a gratifying programme overall, and the recorded sound is sparklingly clear.

Andrew Farach-Colton

Haydn • Mozart

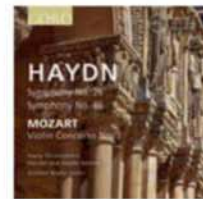
Haydn Symphonies – No 26, 'Lamentatione'; No 86 **Mozart** Violin Concerto No 3, K216^a

^a**Aisslinn Nosky** *vn*

Handel and Haydn Society / **Harry Christophers**

Coro © COR16158 (69' • DDD)

Recorded live at Symphony Hall, Boston, January 27 & 29, 2017



Harry Christophers and his Bostonians continue their survey through Haydn's

'Paris' Symphonies with the suave No 86, pairing it this time with No 26, the *Lamentatione*, named for its incorporation of a chant melody into the first movement. This is a central work of the composer's *Sturm und Drang* style and the Handel and Haydn Society strings accordingly dig in and make a proper meal of all that angst. It's still a smoother sound than that achieved by the likes of Giovanni Antonini and Il Giardino Armonico but it serves this middle-period music well. The later work is a product of the High Classical style and also benefits from the degree of sheen these players provide. This is going to be a particularly rewarding 'Paris' cycle when it is completed: only two more to go, *La Reine* and the woefully underrated No 87.

Concertmaster Aisslinn Nosky has recorded all of the genuine Haydn violin concertos so turns now to Mozart. This is

a lovely, witty performance of the G major, as attested by the coos of delight from the audience. It's a far cry from the cool brilliance of Isabelle Faust's *Gramophone* Recording of the Year (Harmonia Mundi, 12/16) but has its own charm, perhaps even of the sort that might not pall on repeated hearings.

Each issue from these forces builds on the successes of its predecessors and it's gratifying that an ensemble with Haydn in its name is promoting his music with such imagination and flair. Competition in the Haydn marketplace is heating up, so it's all kudos to Christophers and his players for such distinctive performances of these still underestimated works. **David Thresher**

Haydn

'An Imaginary Orchestral Journey'

Symphonies: No 6, 'Le matin' - Minuet; No 45, 'Farewell' - Finale; No 46 - Finale; No 60, 'Il Distratto' - Finale; No 64, 'Tempora mutantur' - Largo; No 90 - Finale. The Creation - Representation of Chaos. L'isola disabitata - Sinfonia. The Seasons - Introduction to Winter. The Seven Last Words - The Earthquake. Music for Musical Clocks

London Symphony Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle

LSO Live (M) LSO0808 (51 • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London, July 11 & 12, 2017



The concerts last July looked a peculiar affair and the CD appears so too. Rattle

has chosen a handful of Haydn's wildest children and sequenced them as 'An Imaginary Orchestral Journey'. And do you know what? It actually works really rather well.

This was the second half of the concert, following the Prelude and Liebestod and Bartók's Second Piano Concerto, so it's instantly clear that Rattle considers Haydn's music to be just as heavyweight as that by those later masters. Nevertheless, he's streamlined the orchestra to a string section of 8.8.6.5.3, which still provides enough heft for the Chaos-Earthquake opening while not obscuring the LSO's wonderful winds.

Some of these children are truly wild. The overture to *L'isola disabitata* is pretty much as *Sturmisch und Drangisch* as Haydn ever got; the phrases don't quite seem to join up in the slow movement of *Tempora mutantur*; the orchestra stops to retune in the finale of *Il Distratto*. The double bass gets a solo in *Le matin* while the whole orchestra shows off its virtuosity in the

finale of No 46, a B major graveyard for under-rehearsed bands. The 'Music for Musical Clocks' sounds like something left on the cutting-room floor during the *Sgt Pepper* sessions and one has to forgive Rattle for milking three rounds of applause from the false endings of No 90's finale.

Surely the title isn't quite right: it should be 'imaginative' rather than 'imaginary', as this music is real, still able to surprise and delight, and this sequence is a true breath of fresh air, enabling even died-in-the-wool Haydnistas to hear something new in these often forgotten gems of genius. **David Thresher**

Kabalevsky • Weinberg

Kabalevsky Cello Concerto No 1, Op 49^a.

Fantasy (after Schubert, D940)^b

Weinberg Violin Concerto, Op 67^c

^cBenjamin Schmid ^{vn}Harriet Krijgh ^{vc}

^bClaire Huangci ^{pf}ORF Vienna Radio

Symphony Orchestra / Cornelius Meister

Capriccio (P) C5310 (67 • DDD)



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barbican.org.uk/classical

Music is an
outburst of
the soul
Frederick Delius



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Weinberg's Violin Concerto (1959) made its way to the West long before its composer was as widely known (albeit via recordings) as he is today, and it should have established itself as a concert staple. Benjamin Schmid brings unstinting advocacy – whether to the propulsive energy of the initial *Allegro*, tense inwardness of the ensuing intermezzo and fervent eloquence of the *Adagio* (the *attacca* between them tellingly observed), then the robust energy of a finale whose climactic withdrawal into silence is powerfully conveyed here. Cornelius Meister, increasingly a name with which to reckon, secures playing of character and commitment from the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra.

While there is nothing amiss in coupling the Weinberg with music by Kabalevsky, the works featured here are not among his finest. One of several concertante works written to be played (and appreciated) by younger musicians, the First Cello Concerto (1949) is appealing though insubstantial, while the piano Fantasy after Schubert's D940 (1961) is a curious hybrid along the lines of Liszt's *Wanderer Fantasy* – deftly realised if hardly essential listening. Harriet Krijgh and Claire Huangci leave nothing to be desired in their respective readings but there are more substantial such pieces by either composer which would have made more pertinent couplings.

Those wanting just the Weinberg should consider the recent account by Ilya Gringolts or the pioneering version (still sounding well after almost six decades) from Leonid Kogan. Torleif Thedéen tackles both Kabalevsky cello concertos, the second a masterpiece from the later Soviet era, while Michael Korstick includes the Fantasy alongside all four piano concertos. Admirers of the three gifted soloists featured here should not hesitate to acquire this disc, even if it could have been more judiciously assembled in terms of the repertoire available.

Richard Whitehouse

Kabalevsky Cello Concerto No 1 – selected comparisons:

Thedéen, NDR Orch, Hanover, Prabava

(CPO) CPO777 668-2

Kabalevsky Fantasy – selected comparisons:

Korstick, NDR Orch, Hanover, Francis

(11/12) (CPO) CPO777 658-2

Weinberg – selected comparisons:

Kogan, Moscow PO, Kondrashev

(1/98⁸) (MELO) MELCD100 2315

Gringolts, Warsaw PO, Kasparyk

(5/15) (WARN) 2564 62248-3

Kernis

'Dreamsongs – Three Concertos'

Kernis Dreamsongs^a. Viola Concerto^b. Concerto with Echoes^c. **Schumann Fughetta**, Op 32 No 4^d

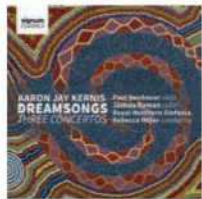
Traditional Tumbalalaika (arr Kernis)^e

^{be}Paul Neubauer ^{va}a Joshua Roman ^{vc}

^{de}Aaron Jay Kernis ^{pf abc}Royal Northern Sinfonia /

Rebecca Miller

Signum © SIGCD524 (78' • DDD)



Honoured and widely performed in the US, Aaron Jay Kernis's music has struggled

to register a similar impact beyond its shores. *Gramophone*'s 2017 label of the year, Signum Classics, is doing its part to redress the imbalance: 'Dreamsongs' follows on from the same label's brilliantly quirky and imaginative 2011 release, 'Goblin Market' (5/11).

In fact, there's a strong European slant to Kernis's music. His three-movement Viola Concerto brings together a Yiddish song ('Tumbalalaika') with Schumann's Fughetta from his Op 32 set of four piano pieces, while the *Concerto with Echoes* draws on Bach's Sixth *Brandenburg Concerto*. Echoes of the past are voiced through quotation or allusion and weave together a narrative that often takes personal reflection and experience as its starting point.

A different kind of buried memory flows through the two-movement cello concerto *Dreamsongs*, one that shifts uneasily between fantasy and reality. A delicate, songlike melody emerges from the solo cello's opening line like a butterfly from a chrysalis. The second movement, 'Kora Song', sees the cello imitate the West African instrument through the use of a plectrum at various points to pluck notes and strum chords. The style is more direct and dancelike but, as is often the case with Kernis, an underlying restlessness lurks beneath the music's calm exterior and soon enough the music descends into a darker, more dramatic and disturbing sonic landscape.

Both concertos are highly virtuosic. The efficacy of the Viola Concerto is certainly aided by an excellent performance by longtime Kernis exponent Paul Neubauer. Joshua Roman's outstanding performance of the cello concerto is the disc's highlight, however. In the cadenza section, heard towards the end of the concerto, intricate passagework demands rapid alternation between arco and left-hand pizzicato, culminating (according to the composer's directions in the score) in a Jimi Hendrix-

style 'freakout'. Roman's extraordinary performance combines the expressive control of Casals with the creative individuality and virtuoso flair of Hendrix himself. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

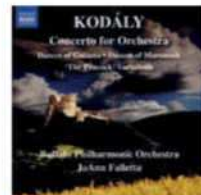
Kodály

Concerto for Orchestra. Dances of Galánta.

Dances of Marosszék. Variations on a Hungarian Folk Song, 'The Peacock'

Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra / JoAnn Falletta

Naxos © 8 573838 (77' • DDD)



Béla Bartók once said of his friend Zoltán Kodály that

'his true nature is

contemplative'. Did JoAnn Falletta have that nugget in mind while quite literally 'controlling' these sturdy performances? Maybe not, but still we sense Kodály's tendency to recoil from expressive overload – where his friend Bartók might have gone the whole hog – in the performances as much as in the works themselves.

The obvious point of comparison is Kodály's Concerto for Orchestra, which predates Bartók's by four years and like that piece was written for an exuberant American orchestra (though, in 1940, the Chicago Symphony was yet to meet Fritz Reiner). The piece's heart is its central essay in soulful introspection induced by a string sextet, played gorgeously and undemonstratively here. But I'm not sure Naxos's deep sound picture capitalises on the jungle baroque machinations with which the piece begins and picks up again later, especially as Falletta does well to keep things structurally light by controlling momentum and leaning gently into junctions.

Of similar architectural interest are Kodály's *Variations on a Hungarian Folk Song*, written the year before. Again, the performance is marked out by its sense of care: the counterpoint of rhythms in Variations 6 and 7, the delicate sparkle in Var 10 and the steady climb to the theme's final emancipation that ratchets up from Var 12 to the end are all well plotted here. The big moments come off fine but the journeys thereto enchant more.

Kodály's well-known dance sets speak more plainly, and we hear how good some of the Buffalo players are (notably the solo clarinet). Falletta is less indulgent with rubato than some, including Iván Fischer in the *Dances of Marosszék* – again, it's about control. Others might want more flair, but



A nose for theatre: Adam Fischer continues his superlative Mahler cycle with a terrific First Symphony – see review on page 61

there's not an awful lot wrong with these committed performances that underline Kodály's craft as much as his soul and include a rich, to-the-point essay by Edward Yadzinski. **Andrew Mellor**

Koffler

'En hommage'

Piano Concerto, Op 13^a. Symphony No 2, Op 17^b. String Quartet No 2, 'Ukrainian Sketches', Op 27^c. Quatre Poèmes, Op 22^d. Two Songs, Op 1^d

^dFredrika Brillembourg *mez* ^aDaniel Wnukowski *pf*

^cPolish Quartet, Berlin; ^{ab}Polish Sinfonia Iuventus Orchestra / Christoph Slowinski *d**pf*

EDA © EDA042 (67' • DDD)

^{ab}Recorded live at the Witold Lutosławski Concert Studio, Warsaw, May 7, 2016

Texts and translations available from eda-records.com



Józef Koffler (1896-1944) was an exact contemporary of Roberto Gerhard and

Roger Sessions. Like them, his identity as a composer was defined in no small part by the possibility of treating Schoenbergian modernism – the 12-note method, in particular – as something that might

invigorate, rather than simply replace, traditional styles and techniques.

Koffler was born in Poland and studied in Vienna with (among others) the Schoenberg pupil Egon Wellesz, also becoming acquainted with Alban Berg. But a career that was already split between university-based research and teaching on the one hand and composition on the other was further disrupted by the military and political upheavals that afflicted Europe between 1914 and 1945. Based in Lwów (now Lviv in Ukraine) after 1924, Koffler was successful enough to merit comparison with Symanowski as a leading light of forward-looking Polish music, but the compositions included on this CD make that comparison difficult to justify. The two sets of songs from 1917 (Op 1) and 1935 (Op 22) have forceful moments of late-Romantic intensity, but the three instrumental works seem uneasy in their attempts to link post-tonal progressiveness to those aspects of neoclassicism and nationalism that, Koffler evidently felt, would make them more acceptable in the increasingly repressive political climate of the time.

Perhaps Koffler lacked the energy and confidence of composers such as

Hindemith and Martinů who turned away from radicalism in the inter-war years without serious loss of expressive or structural conviction. It could well be that other works, praised by commentators who know the full range of his output – the String Trio (1928) and the cantata *Love* (1931), for example – would make a more positive impression. Here the performances of the songs and String Quartet No 2 are more convincing than the rather rough-and-ready live recordings of the symphony and concerto. The booklet notes describe the harrowing circumstances of the abduction and presumed murder of Koffler and his wife during the final months of the Second World War; at the very least this disc offers a rare chance to hear something of a Jewish composer's brave and determined struggle to make music during an impossibly difficult time.

Arnold Whittall

Liszt

'RIAS Recordings, Vol 2'

Piano Concertos – No 1, S124^a; No 2, S125^b. Three Petrarch Sonnets, S161 Nos 4-6^c.

Tannhäuser-Ouverture (Wagner), S442^c

Jorge Bolet *pf* ^{ab}**Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra** / ^aLawrence Foster, ^bEdo de Waart



qobuz

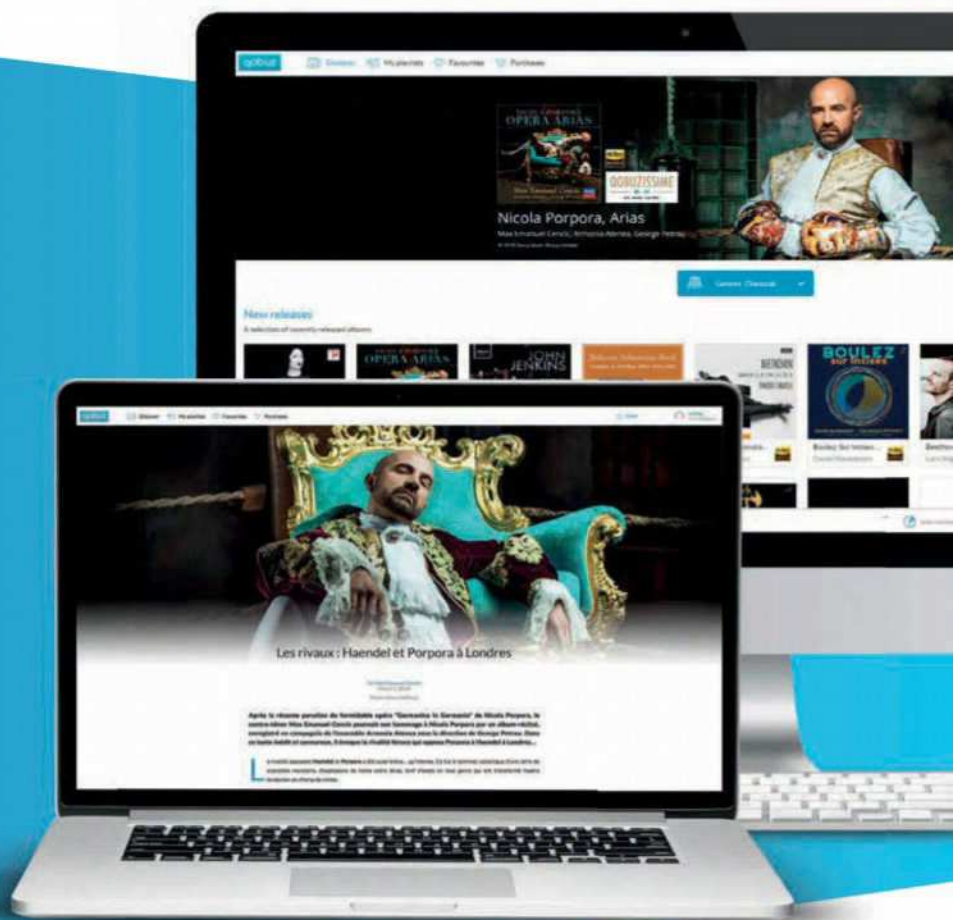
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Audite © AUDITE97 738 (79' • ADD/DDD)

^{ab}Recorded live at the Haus des Rundfunks, Berlin, November 30, 1971; December 19, 1982; ^crecorded 1973



The repertoire is all Liszt. Bolet was one of the finest of all Liszt players. Liszt was the composer who, as we have noted before, made his name internationally famous when he played for Dirk Bogarde in *Song Without End* (chosen, the booklet reminds us, in preference to the younger Van Cliburn). One's spirits lift even before the 'play' button is pressed.

There are studio recordings of Bolet in the two concertos, both with David Zinman and an earlier one of No 1 with Robert Irving, but these Deutschlandradio recordings are live performances – and Bolet was always at his best in front of an audience. There may be flashier and speedier accounts of the E flat Concerto (recorded 1971) but few that are more powerful, magisterial and, ultimately, thrilling (Bolet whips up a storm in the final pages), even if the workaday Lawrence Foster is sometimes just behind the beat.

The A major Concerto elicits a similar response of noble magnificence, closer in tempos and character to von Sauer than de Greef (the only two Liszt pupils to have recorded both concertos), recorded in the same venue as the First Concerto but 11 years later and under the alert Edo de Waart.

The three *Petrarch Sonnets* provide an introspective interlude not markedly different from Bolet's later account for Decca (6/84) in his recording of the second book of *Années de pèlerinage*. The Wagner-Liszt *Tannhäuser* Overture was one of Bolet's specialties. This astonishing studio recording (RIAS Funkhaus, Berlin) was made in October 1973, three months after his RCA recording (not released until 2001) and four months before the unforgettable performance of February 1974 in the legendary Carnegie Hall recital that established him as one of the all-time greats. The command of structure, the judicious pacing and unleashing of those final torrential octaves under the main theme send shivers up the spine.

Jeremy Nicholas

Mahler

Symphony No 1

Düsseldorf Symphony Orchestra / Adám Fischer
AVI-Music © AVI8553390 (53' • DDD)



This is a terrific account of Mahler's fledgling symphony – full of the rashness

and impetuosity of youth and the wild imaginings that go hand in hand with it. Each time that eight-octave-deep 'silence' of the opening page sounds, hazy violin harmonics tracing a haze of light on the dawn horizon, you have to wonder at this twenty-something's daring holding to the rules of symphonic form while seeking new dimensions with his nose for theatre.

Adám Fischer has a nose for theatre, too, and one can imagine how long he and his engineers spent, for instance, getting the distancing of the offstage trumpets just right in the opening pages. He judges the ambling 'wayfarer' theme just right, too, as light and airy as can be and with that first-time freshness. Then there is mystery as shadows fall across the music in the development – a sense of wonder at adventures to come. But most of all in this first movement there is excitability. The explosion of fanfares at the climax is a release of energy and then some but it is the exuberance of the wayfarer theme set free and romping home that has more than a touch of Bernstein about it.

The middle movements are if anything even more ripely characterised than in Bernstein's glorious Royal Concertgebouw recording. The lumpy Scherzo is earthy and coarse, with rosiny strings digging into its stomping rhythms and Mahler's stopped horns especially vivid sniggering in the reprise. The Trio is shy and awkward in its attempts to be graceful and then it's more of the knees-up with Fischer whipping up the tempo and making capital of the whooping horns.

I'd like to have heard a slightly less beautiful tone from the solo double bass (at least it's solo) at the start of the eerie third movement – but the delivery of that favourite children's song sounding so forlorn (the first of a lifelong succession of funeral marches) still gives one chills and Fischer's exaggerated *tempo rubato* throughout this movement is full of the spirit of the backstreet coffee house with its klezmer band of well-meaning locals. It's heavy with Mahlerian irony, that distinctive juxtaposition of pathos and bathos, with the rosy Trio – hushed and beautiful here – full of homely well-being.

If I have a single reservation about Fischer's reading – and he is far from being alone in this – it concerns his tempo for the stormy *Allegro* of the finale, which for all its shock and awe is for me just a hair's

breadth – and I mean a hair's breadth – short of pace towards that last degree of reckless imperative. Tiny adjustments make all the difference in Mahler. But there is so much here to enjoy: the heart-easing violin glissando into the second subject, phrased with unaffected honesty; the magical return to the symphony's opening material where the returning second subject is suddenly more meaningful in the context of all that has gone before; and the barnstorming 'titan' of a coda where Mahler's rather trite triumphal theme (with horns standing, of course – more 'visual' theatre) assumes such gung-ho confidence.

There is an extraordinary kinship and telepathy between Fischer and his Düsseldorf orchestra. They may not be the most glamorous-sounding ensemble in the world but the heart and spirit of the playing sweeps all before it. This is shaping up to be the most idiomatic and exciting cycle of Mahler symphonies since Kubelík and Bernstein. **Edward Seckerson**

Mahler

Symphony No 3

Mihoko Fujimura *mez*

Israel Philharmonic Orchestra / Zubin Mehta

Helicon © 02-9680 (90' • DDD • T/T)

Recorded live at the Charles Bronfman Auditorium, Tel Aviv, July 14, 2016



Arriving simultaneously with the news that Lahav Shani is to succeed

Zubin Mehta at the helm of the Israel Philharmonic, this recording celebrates one of music's longest-lasting partnerships. Mehta first conducted the orchestra way back in 1961, a late replacement for Eugene Ormandy, which may prompt the reflection that, like Ormandy at Philadelphia, he has perhaps stayed too long. By 2019 he will have clocked up 50 years as music advisor, 42 as music director.

We don't necessarily think of this consummate political funambulist as a Mahler man, his genial nature seemingly at odds with the composer's angst-ridden sensibility. However, if we include a 2008 performance accessible via the Berlin Philharmonic's Digital Concert Hall, this is Mehta's fifth commercial recording of his favourite Mahler symphony. It isn't even his first with the Israel Philharmonic. Older collectors may recall his earliest LP set, for Decca, and not only because of the sterling, Erda-like contribution of Maureen Forrester. In the old days you had to turn

over the disc part-way through the first movement!

Under Mehta's latter-day direction Mahler's invention is apt to turn perky, the opening movement no longer an exercise in dynamic extremes, the second full of sunlight albeit not ideally polished. In the third the posthorn solos ought to sound further away; and why apply the brakes for the concluding outburst? Later, you may wonder why Mehta didn't insist on a soloist with a more contralto-ish timbre than Mihoko Fujimura's, not that her (over-miked) singing isn't very fine in its way. Mahler's controversial *hinaufziehen* ('pull up') markings are rendered as zany glissandos. Only in the finale does Mehta's good-natured approach pay substantial dividends. Avoiding a self-conscious quest for transcendence, the argument moves more urgently than in Los Angeles, 1978, the final triumph notably unembarrassed, young man's music.

Iván Fischer's Budapest studio production offers greater refinement, deeper sonic perspectives and none of the bronchial noises-off afflicting the present live issue, but then Helicon are going for a particular demographic. In addition to large-print texts and translations, the booklet contains 10 pictures of the handsome octogenarian. **David Gutman**

Selected comparisons:

Los Angeles PO, Mehta (5/80⁶) (DECC) Ⓢ 443 030-2DF2
Budapest Fest Orch, I Fischer (6/17) (CHCL) CCSSA38817

Muhly

Howards End - original series soundtrack

Orchestrate / Nico Muhly

Milan Ⓢ 399 976-2 (63' • DDD)



In the same week last November that BBC Television unveiled its new

adaptation of *Howards End*, ENO presented the premiere of Nico Muhly's opera *Marnie* at the London Coliseum. Such events are rare but nonetheless welcome in a musical world where composers stray less from their home ground than once was the case. Unlike the grand affair that is *Marnie*, *Howards End* is scored for a small body of strings and piano with a sparing splash of synthesised percussion. From the moments the credits roll the ear is drawn to something fresh and original, with no hint of Edwardiana in view. Muhly's music is hand in glove with the swiftly directed, contemporary take on Forster's literary classic, adapted by writer Kenneth Lonergan.

The 'Opening' (track 2) is a brisk, well-paced *allegretto* with busy piano-writing overlaid with string ornamentation, suggesting the laughter and chatter of the two well-to-do families around whom the story unfolds. The Schlegel family are apt to talk across one another, their lively discourse captured by Muhly in weaving melodic lines exhibiting a polyphonic process (tracks 5, 7, 20 and 22). It's all done with the lightest of touches; yet, as these cues progress, the sense of each being a composition in miniature lends cohesion and focus for the listener. Save for 'Seaside', a slow waltz, there's no concession to period detail, a relief in itself when too often soundtracks fall back on well-known classics to satisfy some emotional requirement.

Muhly doesn't eschew expressiveness. The cue 'Empty House' and his sympathetic portrait of the unfortunate Leonard Bast testify to that. Other cues, such as 'Night Walk' and 'Miscommunication' live up to their titles, the one a spooky nocturnal perambulation, the other an intense study of the unravelling of human affairs.

It would have been good to have had a note about this music in the CD booklet. For that one must turn to the piece on Muhly by Paul Griffiths in the programme for the ENO *Marnie*, where he cites how the polyphonic tradition in English cathedral music, experienced by Muhly, 'can precipitate an unexpected effect anywhere from grief to ecstasy', a sensation caught so well in this soundtrack to *Howards End*. **Adrian Edwards**

Prokofiev • Rachmaninov

Prokofiev Piano Concerto No 2, Op 16^a

Rachmaninov Piano Concerto No 2, Op 18^b

Denis Matsuev *pf*

Mariinsky Orchestra / Valery Gergiev

Mariinsky Ⓢ MAR0599 (63' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Concert Hall of the Mariinsky Theatre, St Petersburg, June '25 & '26, 2016



Gergiev. Matsuev. Rachmaninov. What could possibly go wrong? Well, quite

a lot as it happens. This is, apparently, a live recording though you'd never know it, the concert hall of the Mariinsky Theatre eerily devoid of both coughers and clappers. The piano is recorded very well forwards, affording an excellent opportunity of hearing even the most insignificant passagework loud and clear. Right from the start, there's a feeling of impatience from Matsuev and, when

building up to the *alla marcia* section, of a scarily frantic quality which I found at odds with the music. Of course, technically speaking Matsuev is a phenomenon: just hear how he handles the first subject of the finale – difficult to play in tempo at the ferocious speed he adopts – but the recording balance means he steamrollers over such passages as the dialogue between himself and the woodwind in the bars immediately preceding, a further example where this recording falls below the best. The only time I was moved by Matsuev's playing was the return of the second subject in this movement, which he plays so magically well that you wonder why the rest of it is so hard-hearted. A burst of over-excitement leads to a near derailment 10 bars from the end.

The same reservations over piano/orchestra balance pertain to the Prokofiev but here Matsuev's abrasive vehemence pays dividends in a performance that exactly captures the sardonic, bitter character of this 'deeply fraught work' (Daniel Jaffé in his excellent booklet). The grotesque first-movement cadenza is superbly graded – one can quite understand why listeners at the work's 1913 premiere were said to be 'frozen with fright, hair standing on end'. In the *perpetuum mobile* Scherzo you will hear more of Prokofiev's wonderfully deft orchestral punctuation from the lighter touch of Bavouzet and Noseda (Chandos, 3/14); and Jorge Bolet and Ainslee Cox on Genesis (back in 1973) take no prisoners when it comes to the frenetic finale. But this Matsuev/Gergiev Prokofiev Second can be thoroughly recommended ... unlike its coupling.

Jeremy Nicholas

Prokofiev

'Romantic Suites'

Cinderella, Op 87 - Suite.

Romeo and Juliet, Op 64 - Suite

Brussels Philharmonic Orchestra /

Stéphane Denève

DG/Discovery Ⓢ 481 6548 (68' • DDD)



For this dip into Prokofiev's two major ballets, Stéphane Denève

decides against any of the published suites but makes his own pick'n'mix selection. Each sequence is (mostly) played in chronological order, so the 10 numbers from *Romeo and Juliet* culminate in Juliet's death, although Cinders is left high and dry as the midnight chimes signal pumpkin time to close the disc.

The Brussels Philharmonic is a fine orchestra. Even so, it's quite a coup for this recording to appear on DG when the Universal label boasts complete Prokofiev ballet scores from the likes of the Mariinsky, Russian National, Cleveland and Boston Symphony orchestras. The Brussels strings scurry along silkily in 'Juliet as a Young Girl' and there's impish precision to 'Masks', but there are times I'd have liked greater emotional intensity in other numbers. The strings never approach the hysterical fever pitch of the best Russian orchestras and the woodwinds are solidly secure rather than sardonic.

I think the selection from *Cinderella* comes off marginally better, where Denève enjoys the jaunty fun of numbers such as the 'Shawl Dance'. *Cinderella's* arrival at the ball tingles with tender anxiety and the 'Amoroso' finale to the ballet as she walks off with her prince is gorgeously played (though it is tucked earlier into Denève's selection).

This makes an attractive introduction to these two ballets but, for the price of a single full-price disc, you could snap up the scores in their full glory in any number of classic interpretations, Gergiev for *Romeo and Juliet* (LSO Live, 3/10), Pletnev for *Cinderella* (DG, 6/95) being my top recommendations. **Mark Pullinger**

Rachmaninov

Piano Concertos - No 2, Op 18; No 3, Op 30

Yevgeny Sudbin *pf*

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Sakari Oramo

BIS (F) BIS2338 (75' • DDD/DSD)



The C minor Second Concerto has left me sitting on the fence. One moment

I found myself luxuriating in the gorgeous soundscape, the grand sweep of the playing and the sure-footed narrative in the company of what seems to be an accommodating partnership. Then some little detail would snap me out of my comfort zone – an unusual accent, a buried phrase brought to the fore, a passage played in a fresh or unconventional way.

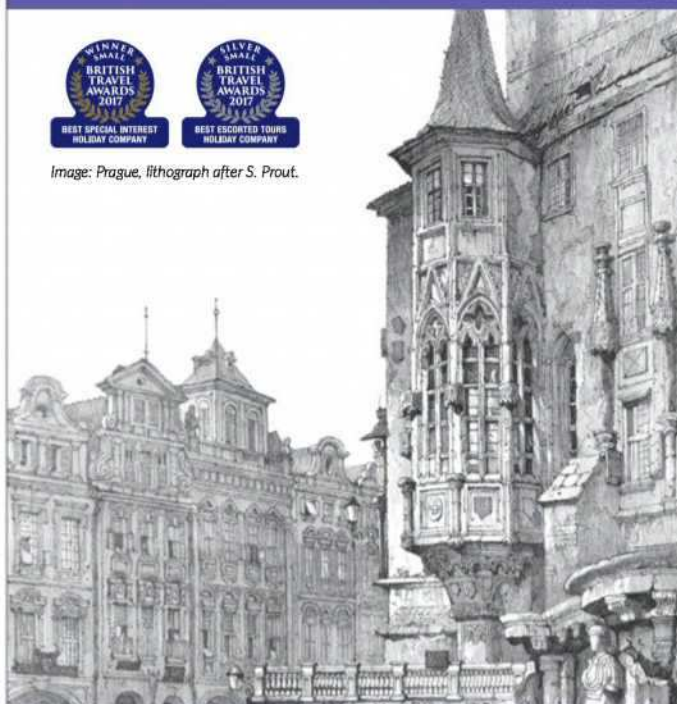
Some examples: Sudbin plays the famous eight opening chords way faster than the composer (as, controversially, does Stephen Hough with Andrew Litton – taking the score at face value, perhaps, rather than the composer's own recording) but copies the unwritten breaks to the left-hand chords that Rachmaninov also adds. Sudbin then ignores the *ritenuto* before the *a tempo con passione* (bar 9). Why? It diminishes the effect and the eight chords become a

throwaway gesture. But then move to the section after the *alla marcia* and Sudbin takes your breath away with playing of matchless beauty (6'27" *et seq.*). The slow movement is artfully shaped, the perfect curve that Rachmaninov loved so much, with the cadenza forcefully articulated. Hopes are high for the finale ... but has there ever been a more sluggish, deconstructed understanding of *allegro scherzando*? In the coda, unlike the rest of the concerto, the piano is buried almost inaudibly under the orchestra. And yet, despite the reservations, this fresh, thought-provoking and entirely individual look at the concerto absolutely demands attention.

No such reservations apply to the Third Concerto. All that needs to be said, really, is that this is a truly outstanding account from the recording team, soloist, conductor and orchestra (the silky-smooth strings, brass ensemble and woodwind soloists deserve special praise). Sudbin opts for the bigger of the two first-movement cadenzas, the most convincingly I have heard it played since the great, much-missed Rafael Orozco. Sakari Oramo takes the *Intermezzo's* opening unusually slowly (a grief-stricken 2'22" as opposed to the composer's 1'51" with Ormandy). It's highly effective, as is the way in which he



Image: Prague, lithograph after S. Prout.



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holds everything so tautly together in the finale. For Sudbin this is no mere virtuoso vehicle (though he does not stint on that element) where telling detail is subsumed into the whole in the most intelligent way. If this were the first time I had heard the Third Concerto I should count myself fortunate. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Respighi

Il tramonto^a. *Trittico botticelliano*.

Vetrata di chiesa

^aAnna Caterina Antonacci *sop* Liège Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / John Neschling
BIS (F) BIS2250 (66' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



The latest disc in John Neschling's Respighi survey focuses on works in which his

post-Romantic idiom and love of early music collide and fuse. The centrepiece is *Il tramonto*, his 1914 setting of Shelley for soprano or mezzo-soprano and strings. A study in decadent morbidity, its preoccupations are those of the Italian Symbolists, who took Shelley as a model. *Tristan* and *Pelléas* are usually cited as the primary influences, though the heated string-writing and extreme chromatic progressions are more reminiscent of *Verklärte Nacht*. Respighi's often syllabic word-setting is usually described as Debussian, though the greater debt, frequently overlooked, is to Monteverdi, whose operatic monologues inform the subtly inflected vocal line that ceaselessly shifts between recitative and arioso.

Neschling's soloist is Anna Caterina Antonacci, who brings to the work the declamatory power and textual understanding that make her such a compelling interpreter of Monteverdi himself. Her dark, slightly acrid tone suggests world-weariness at the outset and gives tremendous resonance to Shelley's oblique narrative of a hermetic, unnamed aesthete, whose sudden death, after his first night of love, leaves his mistress Isabella to waste away in self-imposed solitude. The recording places Antonacci fractionally too far forwards, capturing an occasional pulse in the sound, but against that must be set the often extraordinary range of vocal colour she deploys throughout: the way, for instance, she suddenly bleaches her tone as she comments on Isabella's deathly pallor is typical of the expressive detail and intelligence she brings to the performance as a whole. Neschling's conducting, slow yet pressured, adds immeasurably to the oppressive atmosphere of it all. It's the

most searching version of the work that I know.

Its companion pieces are the *Trittico botticelliano* of 1927 and *Vetrata di chiesa*, completed a year earlier: both derive their thematic material in whole (*Vetrata*) or in part (*Trittico*) from Gregorian chant. Neschling can't disguise *Trittico botticelliano*'s episodic nature, though he conducts it with considerable grace: the closing 'Birth of Venus' is exquisitely sensuous. Rimsky-Korsakov's influence looms large – perhaps too large – over *Vetrata*, meanwhile. *Sheherazade*'s Young Prince and Princess are the model for the opening 'Flight into Egypt', while the tolling bells that usher in the climactic portrait of Gregory the Great (the putative creator of Gregorian chant itself) derive from Rimsky's version of the *Boris Godunov* Coronation scene. The performance, however, is powerhouse stuff, thrillingly played by the fine Liège orchestra and sumptuously recorded. The whole disc is an excellent addition to a very fine series.

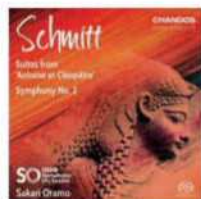
Tim Ashley

Schmitt

Symphony No 2, Op 137. *Antoine et Cléopâtre*, Op 69 – Two Orchestral Suites

BBC Symphony Orchestra / Sakari Oramo

Chandos (F) CHSA5200 (78' • DDD/DSD)



Nearly four decades separate the works here but they are very recognisably by the

same composer: Florent Schmitt, though eclectic, was remarkably consistent.

Overall it's a disc, lavishly recorded (and sounding especially fine in hi-res guise), that offers a persuasive snapshot of a composer hardly over-represented on disc beyond a few key works.

And I'm not sure the two Shakespearean suites have ever sounded more luxurious, either. Composed to accompany a grand, self-financed 1920 show by Ida Rubinstein, this is music that is heavy with sultry eroticism, with dashes of other French composers of the time as well as, to my ears, the sonic ripeness of Richard Strauss's 1914 *Josephslegende*.

Sakari Oramo's new account is more leisurely than JoAnn Falletta's recent Naxos recording with the Buffalo Philharmonic and he certainly gives the score space to convey its allure – from the languorous shimmers of the opening portrait of the two lovers through to the ominously bellicose 'Le camp de Pompée'. The night in the queen's palace is

sensuously evoked: 'soft shivers from muted violins against delicately agitated cymbal and sparkling celesta immediately conjure velvet night', as Paul Griffiths puts it in his exemplary booklet note. The eroticism of 'Orgie et Danses', meanwhile, is always carefully controlled, even when, halfway through, it all collapses into a big sweaty heap of exhausted brass chords.

The Second Symphony dates from the very final years of Schmitt's life – it was premiered in 1958, just months before he died. It's a fine, serious work, full of invention. Its first movement, chattily swapping material between sections of the orchestra, gains considerable momentum from the character of its simple opening motif. The slow movement is noble, gravely seductive and quietly moving. Only the finale perhaps risks losing its way among rather too much jauntiness.

Again, as compared with the main rival – from Leif Segerstam – Oramo is distinctly leisurely: he takes over two minutes longer in that second movement, marked *Lent sans excès*. But he's convincing and persuasive in this work too, and helped by superior playing and engineering – advantages that certainly pay dividends in these scores.

Recommended. **Hugo Shirley**

Suites – selected comparison:

Buffalo PO, Falletta (11/15) (NAXO) 8 573521

Symphony – selected comparison:

Rhineland-Palatinate St PO, Segerstam

(3/95) (MARC) 8 223689

Schubert

Symphony No 9, 'Great', D944

Brandenburg Symphony Orchestra / Peter Gülke

Dabringhaus und Grimm (F) MDG901 2053-6 (61' • DDD/DSD)



The last time I heard the *Great C* major (numbered 8 or 9

depending on where you are) in concert was at the 2015 Proms, with Bernard Haitink and the Chamber Orchestra of Europe. That performance glowed with wonder as Schubert's unique alchemy took hold and even some hard-bitten critics over post-concert beers were unable to suppress broad, satisfied smiles at the wonder that had just unfolded before us.

Perhaps it's unfair to compare a provincial German orchestra (based in Brandenburg an der Havel, 70 or so kilometres west of Berlin) with the crack troops of the COE. And there are many wonderful things here. Peter Gülke, the orchestra's chief since 2015, has a firm

grip on the architecture of the outer movements; only in the Scherzo is there a niggling feeling of sprawl. The woodwind, too, delight in perky solos, balanced judiciously with the ticking string accompaniment figures that power the music.

In fact very little disappoints. Perhaps the rhythm of the oboe solo in the slow movement might have exhibited a more incisive snap; in the Trio sections, others reveal a more authentically Viennese lilt. The timpani, too, are rather boomy in what sounds like a fairly big, empty hall. Nevertheless, this is a performance that commands the attention almost throughout (with a generous quota of repeats), even if it doesn't quite distil the alchemy in quite the same way as certain favourites: Furtwängler (3/55), Beecham in 1955 (Somm, 4/11), Abbado (DG, 2/89 or 7/15), Iván Fischer (8/11) and Marc Minkowski (Naïve, 1/13) among them. **David Thresher**

Shostakovich · Stravinsky · Varèse

Shostakovich Symphony No 6, Op 54^a

Stravinsky Symphony of Psalms^b

Varèse *Amériques*^c

Bavarian Radio Symphony^b Chorus and Orchestra / Mariss Jansons

BR-Klassik (M) 900161 (80' • DDD)

Also available in 'Mariss Jansons: Portrait',

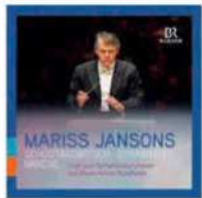
BR-Klassik (M) 900157 (6h 54' • DDD)

Recorded live at the ^{ab}Herkulesaal, Munich,

^bMarch 5 & 6, 2009, ^aMarch 18-21, 2013;

^cPhilharmonie im Gasteig, Munich,

October 13-16, 2015



Available to download or in the context of a 75th-birthday box, this generous 20th-century

portrait mixes the relatively unexpected with repertoire commonly associated with its conductor.

Mariss Jansons first recorded Shostakovich's Sixth in Oslo as part of a peripatetic symphony cycle 17 years in the making (EMI, 11/06). The present account would seem to be that first released by BR-Klassik in tandem with Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* (8/14). It's gloriously played, as one expects from this source, if without the emotional urgency and refreshing lightness of Paavo Järvi's recent Estonian Festival version (Alpha, 3/18). I find Jansons's first movement too fast, the rest trim rather than dangerous.

While the other pieces might not look like core Jansons fare, both featured previously in his 2011-12 concerts with the

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra. Indeed, alternative relays are available as part of that orchestra's own-label anthology: 'Mariss Jansons Live – The Radio Recordings 1990-2014' (RCO15002). True to form, things have slowed down a little since those dates, not that there's any loss of focus or control. Has *Amériques* (given here in its extravagant 1922 guise) ever sounded more beautiful? Atmospheric recorded sound projects the darkly luminous textures the conductor routinely achieves in Munich, the urban cacophony evoked by Varèse's vast array of percussion tempered by impeccable musicianship.

Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* retains sufficient urgency where it matters most and boasts the usual fine tuning, precise chording and attention to detail. Less happily, the choral contingent contains some matronly voices and the soft-grained sound can turn a bit woolly. The rapt closing section has become more ruminative, not quite somnambulistic, closer than before to the emotive manner favoured by Leonard Bernstein (ICA Classics, 6/14).

All these recordings were captured live although applause is retained only after the Varèse and Shostakovich items.

David Gutman

Stravinsky · Debussy

Debussy *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune*.

La mer **Stravinsky** *The Rite of Spring*

Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra / Daniele Gatti

RCO Live (F) RCO17111; (F) RCO17110

(79' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080p • Auro-3D 9.0,

DTS-HD MA 5.0/2.0, DD5.0/2.0 & LPCM stereo • O)

Recorded live, January 11-12, 2017

Stravinsky

The Rite of Spring

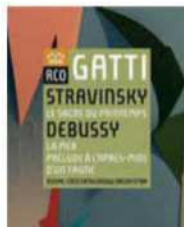
NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra /

Krzysztof Urbanski

Alpha (F) (CD +) ALPHA292 (36' • DDD)

Blu-ray recorded live, February 17, 2017

Video director **Michael Valentin**



Noisy demonstrations at the premiere of Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* caused choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky to have to furiously shout out the numbers from the wings to the dancers on stage, who could no longer hear the orchestra. Fast forward to 'The Glorification of the Chosen One' in the Royal Concertgebouw's filmed

performance (64'45") and you'll catch the second timpanist also furiously counting. It's a sign that the work still holds its occasional terrors, although it's about the only moment in the RCO's polished account under chief conductor Daniele Gatti.

The playing is rhythmically taut but – timpanist apart – there's little sense of actual peril in Amsterdam. Everything is plush, from the silky bassoon opening to the dusky alto flute. Gatti is no slouch – his reading comes in at the same sort of timing as Teodor Currentzis on his zinging MusicAeterna recording – but it's all a bit predictable and safe. For more danger, try Krzysztof Urbanski and the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra. Their new release contains not one but two performances: a CD made in December 2016 (before the new Elbphilharmonie opened) and then a concert filmed the following February which is added on a Blu-ray disc. Two months apart, they're remarkably similar, taken at a marginally more measured tempo than Gatti but feeling much more cataclysmic.

Urbanski is quite the cool dude – hair spiked, tie not quite done up – and allows his bassoonist free rein to begin without any up-beat, which he does with the longest held opening note I've heard, before coiling into a truly mournful wail. Urbanski draws thrilling playing from his orchestra, which strikes me as a much more exciting partnership than Gatti's with the RCO. There's real grit and a sense that they are playing out of their skins, grinding out something urgent and earthy. They are helped by Michael Valentin's video direction where, apart from some deliberate blurring, quick cuts between camera shots give a restless feel. One camera is seemingly placed at the foot of the bass drum percussionist, providing an unusual but fun perspective. Ultimately, would you pay full price for two near-identical performances of *The Rite*? Well, at full price Sony offers just the one audio performance under Currentzis, but I'd still happily pay for it, so why not?

Gatti's *Rite* is preceded by two Debussy favourites, a long and languorous *Faune*, opening with a gorgeous flute solo from Emily Beynon, and an account of *La mer* where Gatti revels in the slow ecstasies of the piece but the lack of momentum is problematic. His readings with the Orchestre National de France (Sony, 8/12) were much livelier. Here, Debussy's marine triptych is more a wallow in the pool than a bracing swim in La Manche. **Mark Pullinger**

Stravinsky – selected comparison:

MusicAeterna, Currentzis (11/15) (SONY) 88875 06141-2



Embracing danger: Krzysztof Urbanski draws thrilling playing from the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra in Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*

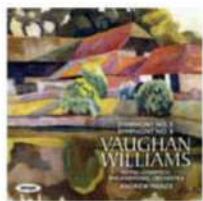
Vaughan Williams

Symphonies – No 5; No 6

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra /

Andrew Manze

Onyx © ONYX4184 (70' • DDD)



This is the third recording in the cycle of Vaughan Williams symphonies that

Andrew Manze has made with Onyx and the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra. The first two, featuring Symphonies Nos 2, 3, 4 and 8, demonstrated not only Manze's versatility and insight into these monuments of 20th-century British symphonic music but also a real affection and sympathy for the composer's fecund understanding of form, architecture and scoring. This new recording continues that insight with panache. The clarity of the orchestral sound, especially in the pointillistic orchestration of the Fifth, is compelling (the Scherzo in particular, whose tempo Manze gives an extra injection of adrenalin).

The first movement of the Fifth is also an exciting interpretation, notably in the way that the development is allowed to accelerate naturally. Yet, at the same time, the 'golden' second subject in E major is given space and luxuriance in its intended contrast to the more restive, mysterious first subject. The Romanze, too, has an opulence which is finely graded. The opening, for example, is almost chamber music-like in the lower strings, a sound which is then permitted to grow incrementally throughout Vaughan Williams's long, lyrical paragraph. Its reprise, replete with gently nuanced countermelody, is deeply moving, as are the radiant closing bars of the Passacaglia, where the counterpoint of the composer's redemptive 'alleluias' brings the work to a tender, heartfelt conclusion, stunningly executed by the strings of the RLPO.

The contrast of the violent gestures of the Sixth Symphony is always going to be a stark one after the diatonic peace of the Fifth, but there is no less clarity in the bigger orchestral textures or rapid string passagework at the opening, or the second subject which belies the obvious 'galumphing' character in other recordings.

Its recapitulation with harp has a visionary quality – a real high point of this recording.

The broad architecture of the more ominous second movement, with its foreboding brass and side drum, is carefully judged so that the cortège-like figures in the trumpets have a disturbing sense of menace when they recur. This almost intimidating mood continues in the demonic Scherzo. Here one is truly able to appreciate the brilliance of Vaughan Williams as a contrapuntist and as an orchestrator; this is virtuoso stuff, splendidly handled by conductor and orchestra. The impressionable shadow of the probing second movement finds its natural conclusion in the unremittingly bleak finale, where Manze's control of the eerily hushed dynamics (not a little reminiscent of Holst's 'Neptune') is consummately managed. Any lover of Vaughan Williams as a symphonist will find this recording exceptionally rewarding. **Jeremy Dibble**

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Messiaen's Catalogue d'oiseaux

The pianist **Pierre-Laurent Aimard** joins Peter Quantrill to talk musical ornithology

Pierre-Laurent Aimard and I meet, as it so happens, in the reception hall at the Royal Academy of Music, where he has given masterclasses and charmed everyone from the students to the woman on the door who escorts us to a windowless dressing room. But within minutes of spreading the *Catalogue d'oiseaux* before us, we are perched on a chilly Alpine precipice – for Messiaen's piano cycle of 1956-58 is as imbued with place and time as any opera or Lisztian tone poem. Not easy to come by, the scores are things of beauty in their own right: 13 pieces in seven volumes, each prefaced by a charcoal drawing of a bird in its native state.

'Le chocard des alpes' (The Alpine Chough) makes an austere opening to the cycle, in line with other severe curtain-raisers to the *Quatuor pour la fin du temps*, *Turangalila-symphonie* and *Saint François d'Assise*. 'Messiaen announces', says Aimard, 'that we're going to speak of a serious subject.' You don't need to read the score's indication of *implacable et massif* to hear bare unyielding rock in the stern progressions which set the scene of the song of the chough, which crosses (*traverse*) the precipice with 'a tragic cry of solitude', as Aimard notes. How on earth is the pianist to convey this level of detail to the scoreless listener?

'It's a very interesting case,' replies Aimard, 'the bird crossing the precipice. As listeners, we don't perceive the alpine chough as such. We perceive Messiaen's harmonies and gestures as a solution for a possible transcription, but we don't imagine it's an exact transcription. As pianists, we have to work on sound projection, maybe with the pedal, so that there is this feeling of space. *Traverse* – that means that it can't be a block of sound. Our task is to convey this tragic dimension – existential, universal. The loneliness of the bird in this menacing landscape is a symbolic projection of the composer, of mankind. How can we create that? We work subjectively, but with what we have.

'We have this terrifying introduction,' continues Aimard. 'We can create the *implacable* – but what kind of 'implacable' feeling is it? From the power of nature, or the time it represents, or creation which surrounds mankind? That's an example of how we work with these pieces. We have to be terrifyingly exact – which was definitely Messiaen's intention, because he was a man of exactitude in a very French, defined way. If you play these pieces without that exactitude, you ruin them. So we have to observe everything about tempo, articulation and rhythm more precisely than in almost any other music. But this is only the first step! The metaphysical dimension is the most important of all.'

There is a brilliance and a difficulty to the second piece, 'Le loriot' (The Golden Oriole), which pays surely more than punning tribute to the pianist for whom Messiaen conceived the *Catalogue*, Yvonne Loriod. During its composition, Messiaen endured the worst personal crisis of his life, while his wife Claire Delbos suffered irreversible cerebral atrophy in a mental institution. 'It was a terrible situation', observes Aimard, 'to lose someone mentally affected like that. And as for the consequences on his daily life... He was left to bring up his son, Pascal. He had not expected to do that –



'Terrifyingly exact': Aimard began playing Messiaen's *Catalogue* 40 years ago

looking after a child was not one of his talents. This was a terrible handicap for him. Then there is the love story with Yvonne, which was marvellous in one way – she helped him to live – but very hard for him in terms of his Catholic identity.'

At this point, birdsong had become a refuge for Messiaen: 'in my darkest hours,' as he confessed, 'when my uselessness is brutally revealed to me'. Later photographs have imprinted on our minds the idea of the composer on his field trips – by a lake or in woodland, rapt in contemplation, pen and notebook to hand, the ever-faithful Yvonne at his side; but Messiaen did much of his research for the *Catalogue* at home, with the aid of birdsong LPs.


Aimard wryly recalls the 'very naughty reactions' of critics who complained of this music's 'stupid naivety' when he began playing it 40 years ago. So we look at the third piece, 'Le merle bleu' (The Blue Rock Thrush), and he shows me how Messiaen transforms the song throughout the piece. 'The song is in the middle of the texture, and it's surrounded by written overtones that create an artificial timbre. Then when it's repeated, the overtones are closer together: the resonance and the song are mixed to create a poetic and spatial heterophony. Later, the overtones are higher – the thrush is further away, so Messiaen has written the song in the lower stave. Because the right hand is stronger, he wants you to cross hands and play the overtones with the left, so that the song itself is always the strongest element; you can feel that you are working on the colour, and it's more delicate. Later on, the song becomes a rhythmical dance, and he changes the resonance overtones to imitate Balinese gongs. At the end, the song of the thrush returns as a souvenir. It's now homophonic, in octaves, like a female choir far away. So Messiaen creates a perception of the bird in the environment through not only dynamics but also harmony.'

The fourth piece is 'Le traquet stapazin' (The Black-Eared Wheatear) – a favourite of the composer, and of the pianist too, and a good place for new listeners to begin. 'This was the first one I learnt,' remembers Aimard. 'When I was 13, like every teenager who loves music, I listened to a lot. I had Loriod's Erato recording and I listened to it every evening – for the charm of the landscape, and its force. The first and last third of the piece are, like many other pieces in the set, a conversation between singers, but the middle section is this sunrise' – the kind of C major with added sixths that is the most familiar Messiaen: the poet of love and joy in *Turangalila-symphonie* and *Saint Francis d'Assise*.

Conversation, however, is the keynote of the *Catalogue*. Whereas Aimard compares 'La bouscarle' (No 9: Cetti's Warbler) to a Mozart opera ('with so many participants, so vivid, harmonious, so fast in conversation, so alive, so positive'), he refers to the 11th piece, 'La buse variable' (The Common Buzzard), as being like a Verdi opera: 'I think of *Simon Boccanegra*. It begins with this incredibly slow, stopped music, as the buzzard circles above – now near, now far.' We note how the buzzard's cry is first repeated nine times, then five, then three. The Trinitarian symbolism is mixed with Messiaen's own belief in the divinity (that is, the indivisibility) of prime numbers. After order, chaos: the buzzard gets into a bloody fight with some crows – 'an example', says Aimard, 'of how a completely new idiom integrates the permanent need for drama in musical composition. Messiaen's ability is to create human archetypes with new materials and new parameters.'

'We have to observe everything about tempo, articulation and rhythm more precisely than in almost any other music'

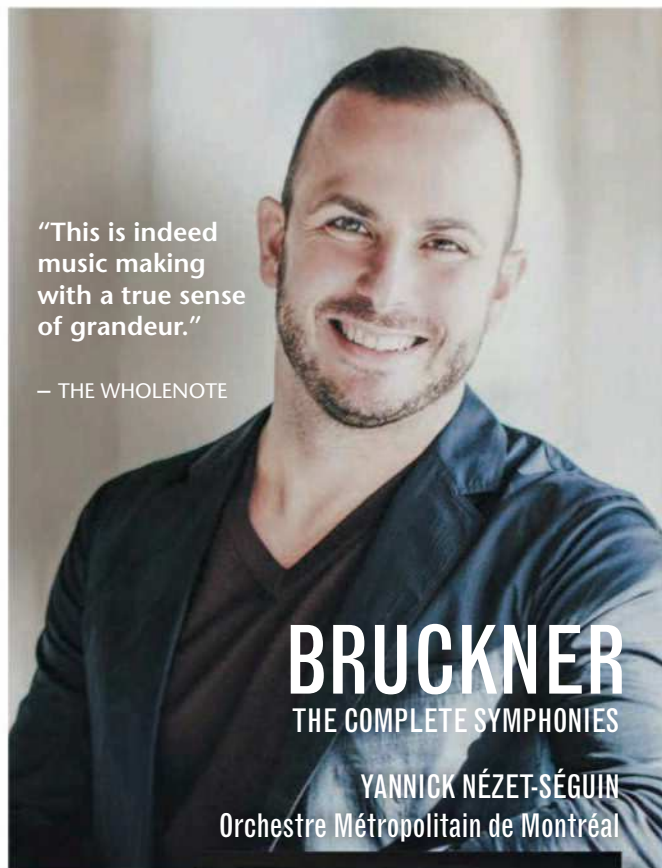
A new study by Roderick Chadwick and Peter Hill (CUP: 2017) analyses *Catalogue d'oiseaux* as the pivot on which the composer's career turned, from the avant-garde explorations of the *Livre d'orgue* (1951) into the syntheses and summations of technique and expression which came to yield *La Transfiguration de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ* (1965-69). 'Le merle de roche' (No 10: The Rock Thrush) is rhythmically experimental in the style of Messiaen as teacher to Boulez and Stockhausen, but the cycle subsides into a tragic epilogue with the final piece, 'Le courlis cendré' (No 13: The Curlew), observed in deepest night off the coast of Brittany, accompanied by the lapping of waves and the boom of a lighthouse. We are as close here as anywhere in the cycle to real birdsong, 'And that's one reason why this piece speaks to us so much,' says Aimard.

'At the centre of the movement are natural transformations,' he says, 'the play of water and fog at night, with undefined harmony and unpredictable movement.' He points to the score: 'These chords disappear little by little – he's announcing, in the late '50s, pieces of mass movement and micropolyphony such as Ligeti's *Atmosphères*. It's prophetic. Notice that the lighthouse signal is the only non-natural phenomenon, the only man-made music, in the entire cycle. Perhaps it warns against "shipwrecks" in life as well as at sea? But the piece ends with water: the silence absorbs the last drops of nature. And the bar's rest at the end – Messiaen finishes the entire cycle with nothing.' 

► For our review of Aimard's recording of *Catalogue d'oiseaux* turn to page 86

"This is indeed music making with a true sense of grandeur."

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Chamber



Andrew Mellor is intrigued by Rautavaara's cello sonatas:

'The First Sonata is carpet-bombed by fist-shaped piano clusters before it embarks on a moving process of recovery' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 75**



Andrew Farach-Colton admires the Stradivari Quartet's Schumann:

'The Stradivari never fail to produce a rich, red-blooded sound, even in the most ferociously difficult passages' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 77**

Bloch

Violin Sonatas^o – No 1; No 2, 'Poème mystique'.

Piano Sonata

■ **Nurit Stark** *vn* **Cédric Pescia** *pf*

Claves © 50-1705 (70' • DDD)



Look on Ernest Bloch's reputation, ye mighty, and despair. In 1957

Bloch merited an entire chapter to himself in Alec Robertson's *Chamber Music* (Shostakovich got a single paragraph and Janáček a grand total of three sentences). Now: well, if his violin sonatas aren't entirely unknown on disc, they're not exactly appearing at the same rate as, say, recordings of Enescu or Ysaÿe – composers who inhabit a comparably fervent, virtuosic late-Romantic sound world.

Fervent is certainly the word for the way Nurit Stark and Cédric Pescia attack the ferocious ostinato that opens the First Sonata: you can hear steel gears whirring, every bit the work of the composer whose self-portrait stares maniacally from the disc's cover. Stark and Pescia aren't afraid to get their hands dirty, and Stark's lower strings sometimes buzz against the fingerboard. But there's fantasy here too, and the pair have a remarkable knack for holding these elements in balance – and finding exactly the right tone-colour at any given instant, whether Pescia's metallic left-hand motor-rhythms or Stark's throaty harmonics in the central *Molto quieto*.

These qualities really come into their own in the single-movement Second Sonata, where Stark immediately finds a sonority of concentrated sweetness. This music breathes the same perfumed air as Szymanowski's *Mythes*, but just as striking as the quiet intimacy of Stark and Pescia's dialogue is the masterful control with which they pace the sonata's 20-minute arc. Pescia's command of both form and colour also makes for a compelling account of the Piano Sonata. It would have been easy for Claves's engineers to let the piano sound

on this disc degenerate into a thunderous wash of bass: in fact, the clarity and balance throughout serve the music handsomely.

Richard Bratby

Brahms

Three Violin Sonatas

Tasmin Little *vn* **Piers Lane** *pf*

Chandos © CHAN10977 (71' • DDD)



In a sense it's a surprise that Tasmin Little and Piers Lane have only now got

round to the Brahms violin sonatas.

Certainly their long familiarity with both the music and each other's approach to it pays dividends and from the off you know you're in safe hands. These are essentially traditional-style performances, relishing the generosity of Brahms's full textures and not undertaking the kind of vibrato-lite experimentation of some.

Little relishes the many instances of Brahms's writing in the violin's alto register and Lane is always responsive to the violin's colourings and shadings, fining his sound right down whenever needed. Lane is sensitive in the piano introduction to the slow movement, too, though few can rival Bronfman in terms of sheer detailing here. The changeability of the Second Sonata's middle movement, on the other hand, is done with a gleeful aplomb, even if I wanted a degree more sense of energy in the same sonata's finale, which here is a little plush compared to Gioconda de Vito and Tito Aprea or Augustin Dumay and Maria João Pires.

To my mind it's the Third Sonata that throws up the biggest reservations – the opening is less magically withdrawn than some, while the hymnic *Adagio* doesn't have the rapture of de Vito with Edwin Fischer or Dumay with Pires. Though Lane is supple in his rendering of the Scherzo, as a whole it lacks the sense of mischief found in such abundance in Pires's playing, while the Little/Lane final *Presto*

agitato is good-humouredly vigorous without finding the subtlety of tone that makes the Znaider/Bronfman partnership so special. **Harriet Smith**

Selected comparisons:

Dumay, Pires (3/93) (DG) 435 800-2GH

de Vito, Fischer, Aprea (12/93) (TEST) SBT1024

Znaider, Bronfman (7/07) (RCA) 88697 06106-2

Brahms • Dvořák

Brahms Piano Trio No 1, Op 8. Hungarian Dance, WoO1 No 6 (arr L Ries) **Dvořák** Piano Trio No 4, 'Dumky', Op 90 B166

The ZEN Trio

DG © 481 6292 (71' • DDD)



The ZEN Trio play this pair of warhorses with the technical assurance, musical

conviction and stylistic unanimity of an ensemble that's been together for many years. In truth, however, pianist Zhang Zuo, violinist Esther Yoo and cellist Narek Hakhnazaryan met in 2015 on the BBC New Generation Artists scheme, and this recording was made at Henry Wood Hall in London the following June.

The first movement of Brahms's B major Trio conveys dynamism and breadth, making sense of both the *Allegro con brio* tempo designation and the music's expansive character. The ZEN are not afraid to take chances, either – slowing slightly at 2'41" so the strings can lean into the yearning, *espressivo* melody. Indeed, throughout the entire work they move from passionate declaration to tender confessional in a manner that sounds utterly natural.

In Dvořák's *Dumky* Trio, the ZEN present a colourful cast of characters. They tear into the opening, like new widows clawing at their clothing, then as Dvořák shuffles the work's seemingly incongruous dramatic elements – the lyrical, lamenting, playful, folksy and fantastical – they deftly slip from one role to the next. And what a wealth of detail they survey. Note the tender spontaneity of the playing at the



Concentrated sweetness: Nurit Stark and Cédric Pescia play Bloch with fervency and fantasy

beginning of the third movement, the rapturous melancholy of the cello solo at 1'34" in the second and the husky vocal quality of the violin solo at 1'45" in the sixth. Zhang Zuo is marvellously sensitive to the variegated texture of the piano part from first note to last.

If only the ZEN paid greater attention to dynamic markings. Where's the sense of a whispered, amorous conversation at the start of the *Adagio* in Brahms's Trio, for example? Although the ZEN's phrasing is beautifully sustained, they play what should be *pianissimo* as *mezzo-forte*, spoiling the effect. Perhaps the fault lies in part with the recording, which is a bit close and brightly lit, sometimes giving an unpleasant edge to the violin's tone. It's frustrating, in any case, given the outstanding quality of the performances.

Happily, there are no caveats regarding the encore: an arrangement of Brahms's Sixth *Hungarian Dance* played with contagious *joie de vivre*. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

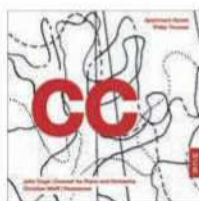
Cage • Wolff

Cage Concert for Piano and Orchestra
Wolff Resistance

Philip Thomas *pf* **Apartment House** / Jack Sheen
Huddersfield Contemporary Records

Ⓜ ② HCR16CD (98' • DDD)

Recorded live at Clothworkers Centenary
Concert Hall, University of Leeds, July 1, 2017



That the dedicatee of John Cage's *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* (1957-58) is Elaine de Kooning (wife of the painter), and that some of the piano part is exhibited at MOMA, indicates the aesthetic ambidexterity of Cage's artwork. Cage approaches the concerto form like a conceptual artist, rethinking the whole thing.

There is no complete score, only parts, each performer free to decide what he or she wishes to play. The piano part has 84 different types of notation, varying from the standard to the abstract. Cage determined the notated music by chance operations and blemishes on his manuscript paper. The conductor indicates not tempo but a sort of variable metronome against which the performers measure their respective tempos. Needless to say, recording the *Concert for Piano and Orchestra* poses unique problems.

The criticism often made of post-Webernian pointillism – that it struggles to sustain interest over large-scale forms – is also relevant here. Sounds that, at the time, had a 'wow factor' of newness have since been naturalised. How, then, to render their impact anew? Philip Thomas

and Apartment House, out of what could simply be a flat plane, render a vibrant surface with all the activity of a Jackson Pollock. Thomas's touch is nuanced and various, a steady centre around which the ensemble's ephemeral voices appear. This version is twice as long as the previous Wergo recording but the extended length allows one to enter in and out of the music.

The work is paired here with *Resistance*, an Apartment House commission by Cage's erstwhile colleague Christian Wolff.

Roughly the same length as the Cage, it contains quotations of left-wing material from Cornelius Cardew and Pete Seeger, and is by turns sprightly and humane where the Cage is drifting and cosmic. It is an apt pairing. **Liam Cagney**

Cage – selected comparison:

Kubera, SEM Ens, Kotik (12/93) (WERG) WER6216-2

Cresswell

Capricci. Kotetete - 1st movt.

Ricercari. String Quartet

Red Note Ensemble

Delphian Ⓢ DCD34199 (61' • DDD)



Born in New Zealand though long resident in Edinburgh, Lyell Cresswell (b1944) is

among those 'well-respected if not widely known' composers whose work is both approachable and unpredictable. This new disc of (mainly) string quartet music offers a chance to find out why.

A fine instance is *Capricci* (2014), its 10 short movements ranging widely and imaginatively over traditional dance forms and rhythms. Highlights include the third, a graceful 'Siciliana' informed by reticent humour; the sixth, an engaging play on Ligeti-like ostinato patterns that fully lives up to its 'Sprocket' title; and the ninth, a 'Brawl' rendering its round-dance origins with graphic immediacy. At under 20 minutes these pieces are best heard in the context of the set overall, as also are *Ricercari* (2016). Among the nine miniatures for violin and cello, the odd-numbered ones are variations on a 'theme' that comes closest to being stated in the fifth, 'Mesto'; themselves intercut by an animated succession of scherzos and caccias, the overall sequence is inspired by the techniques of the Italian painter Maurizio Bottarelli (b1943).

Most substantial here is the String Quartet, completed in 1981 though revised 18 years later so its original format of four movements in two parts was condensed down to three separate movements. Taking its cue from the tradition of Gaelic psalm-singing, where melodic lines are absorbed into melisma, the work unfolds from heady accumulation then dispersal of such ornaments, via a series of solos and duos, to an intense confrontation of ornamented and linear writing prior to a decisive close.

The initial 'Mormorante' from *Kotetete* (2011, its title Maori for 'chattering') provides a capricious rounding-off. The virtuosity of the Red Note Ensemble's playing makes for a warm recommendation, not least for those still to encounter Cresswell's distinctive sound world.

Richard Whitehouse

Dowland

Lachrimae, or Seaven Teares. Captaine Piper his Galiard. Coranto, 'Were every thought an eye'. Dowland's Adew for Master Oliver Cromwell. The Earle of Essex Galiard. Galiard to *Lachrimae*. M Henry Noell his Galiard. M George Whitehead his Almand. M John Langtons Pavan. Sir John Souch his Galiard

Nigel North lute *Les Voix Humaines*

ATMA Classique © AC22 2761 (59' • DDD)



Seven meditations on a shared theme, both musical and emotional, John Dowland's

Lachrimae, or Seaven Teares is much more than just a set of variations. We may not know how this cycle of consort works was originally performed (or even by what instruments – the work is 'set forth for the Lute, Viol or Violins') but the recording catalogue already offers us many possible solutions, including superb accounts from Fretwork, Phantasm and Jordi Savall.

While most ensembles frame the *Lachrimae* with dances published in the same 1604 collection, Les Voix Humaines and lutenist Nigel North look slightly further afield for their additions. The slightly haphazard result sees the sequence of *Lachrimae* movements interspersed with dances and lute songs drawn more broadly from Dowland's output. Lute solos from the later *A Pilgrim's Solace* and a duet from the earlier *Second Book of Songs or Ayres* are welcome, as is the decision to break up the cycle of pavans, but neither feels fully reasoned here.

The dances themselves often tend towards the earnest, both in pacing and weight, diminishing the contrasts that should animate a composer for whom 'Semper Dowland, semper dolens' is surely more knowing joke than straight-faced truth. The *Lachrimae* themselves are more varied. The group's blend is soft-woven and wonderfully fibrous, full of textural interest. Extensive ornamentation throughout the disc and a rhetorical approach to line give the music a pleasing, madrigal-like freedom, and bright flickers of North's lute catch the ear among so many musical shadows. But phrasing that surges and tugs a little too forcibly keeps this otherwise appealing account from rivalling the best already available.

Alexandra Coghlan

Franck • Grieg • Liszt

'Lifelines'

Franck Violin Sonata Grieg Violin Sonata No 1, Op 8 Liszt Two Elegies – S130ter; S131bis

Lea Birringer vn Esther Birringer pf

Rubicon © RCD1007 (61' • DDD)



If you've ever played a musical version of Six Degrees of Separation, you'll

quickly have realised that there aren't many 19th-century composers or performers who aren't linked in some way to Franz Liszt. Liszt commended the young César Franck and, two decades later, endorsed Grieg's First Violin Sonata in glowing terms: 'a strong, imaginative, creative, inventive and admirable talent'.

So it's a nice idea of the German sisters Lea and Esther Birringer to make Liszt's Two Elegies for violin and piano the centrepiece of this recital, and the link between the worlds of Grieg and Franck. The Liszt pieces are not exactly over-recorded, and the pair approach them with style and the full-blooded commitment they bring to the entire disc. They sound like instinctive, physical players, and they're very evidently on the same wavelength as regards the music's ebb and flow. There's a winning freshness about the way they tackle the Grieg in particular, bending into the sweep of a melody. Violinist Lea has an enjoyably springy way with a dance rhythm.

It's fair to say though, that Lea's playing, with a wide vibrato but a slightly wiry tone, sounds more beautiful on lower than higher notes, and her intonation occasionally distorts under pressure. Esther, on piano, more than matches the volatility of her sister's playing; but while they're capable of generating a richly poetic atmosphere in quieter passages (such as the opening exchange of the Franck), their emphatic manner can sometimes weigh the music down: the outer movements of the Franck feel heavy. And the recorded sound – which places the piano at some distance, with a noticeable loss in clarity – doesn't really do any favours to these characterful, if idiosyncratic, artists. **Richard Bratby**

Haydn

Six String Quartets, Op 64

Doric Quartet

Chandos © 2 CHAN10971 (142' • DDD)



As in earlier volumes of their Haydn series, the Doric often dazzle, occasionally frustrate,

in these, the last works Haydn composed before he decamped to London. With their unusually fluid approach to tempo and wide spectrum of colour (including a blanched, vibrato-less tone) and dynamics, they never let you take anything for granted. Which is as it should be. No 1 in C, on the surface the plainest, least distinctive work of the set, gains especially from the Doric's restless imagination, whether in the timing and colouring of the breathtaking shift to D flat in the recapitulation, the spectral C minor Trio, questioning the solid C major certainties of the Minuet, or the sheer variety of expression they bring to the variation third movement. In the finale they can snatch impetuously at the

rhythms; but such is their wide-eyed glee here, right down to the sly, throwaway end (the Doric are good at endings), that objections seem churlish.

While the Doric are incapable of a dull or unconsidered phrase, their liberties with tempo and silence can be extreme. A case in point is their faltering opening of No 2, presumably to underline the initial uncertainty of key (a suggestion of D major brusquely contradicted by B minor). But does Haydnesque deception, here and elsewhere, need this kind of underlining? The colours the Doric distil in this troubled, gawky movement are typically vivid, from the raucous pizzicato twangs at the end of the exposition to the mysteriously remote bare octaves in the development. Yet, listening 'blind', few would guess that Haydn marked the movement *Allegro spiritoso*. For my taste they also exaggerate the contrast between the quasi-Mozartian elegance of the opening of No 3 and the zanily galloping cello – I want to hear this absurd incongruity 'straight', at least first time round. Most extreme of all are the tempo fluctuations in the first movement of No 4. The wholesome, Haydnesque tune on the violin's G string at the end of the exposition is a moment of necessary resolution after the previous harmonic instability. The

Doric distend and cosset it, enervatingly, and then outdo even themselves when it returns at the end of the movement.

If they can underestimate the element of robust directness in Haydn's musical persona – and in the process blur his symmetries – the Doric are consistently illuminating in the slow movements, which rival the Lindsays (ASV, A/01, 4/02) in hushed, musing eloquence and surpass them in beauty of tone. Leader Alex Redington burns into his impassioned *zingarese* lament at the centre of No 6's *Andante* with feverish abandon, while his colleagues' minute attention to the shaping and balance of the lower parts makes the first-violin-dominated *Adagios* of Nos 2, 4 and 5 far more than touching accompanied solos. And while there are moments where I wish the Doric would resist their urge to question and deconstruct the music, Nos 5 and 6 are profoundly satisfying throughout, their first movements amply spacious, the minuets unpredictably and wittily timed, and the finales – high-class show-off music if ever there was – breathtaking in their mingled precision, delicacy and whooping high spirits. The recording, as in previous issues, is in the demonstration class while Dean Sutcliffe's notes, like the playing, are guaranteed to make you hear these quartets with fresh ears. **Richard Wigmore**

Hoffmeister · Rossini

Hoffmeister Four Solo Quartets^a – No 1; No 2

Rossini Six String Sonatas^b – No 1; No 2; No 3

Minna Pensola *vn* **Antti Tikkanen** *b/vn/va*

Tuomas Lehto *vc* **Niek de Groot** *db*

BIS Ⓢ BIS2317 (69' • DDD/DSD)



Hoffmeister and Rossini appear, on the face of it, to be an odd couple indeed.

Certainly I can locate no other disc that pairs their music; perhaps the only time the two might otherwise appear together would be if you like fizzy beer with your steak. Nevertheless, they both composed sets of string quartets with double bass and so find themselves rubbing shoulders here.

Rossini needs no introduction but Franz Anton Hoffmeister (1754–1812) might be best known for lending his name to a quartet by Mozart that he published in 1786. He was a prolific composer himself, active in opera and symphonic forms as well as writing an avalanche of chamber music. He was also a double bass player and accordingly his 'Solo Quartets' are led, as it were, from the bottom, with violin, viola and cello accompaniment. The Dutch bassist Niek de Groot is heroic in his

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starring role, as virtuoso as you like and characterising admirably across a spectrum from melodic to gruff and serious to witty.

De Groot retreats to his more usual job of providing bass underpinning for his three Finnish colleagues (Antti Tikkanen swaps his viola for second violin) in three of the String Sonatas composed by the 12-year-old Rossini. Not yet the operatic master – that would take a few more years – his unassuming chamber works nevertheless show the lightness and humour that would be evident in much of his maturer music, as well as a distinct gift for melody (the wonky opening motif of No 1 in G, for example). There's also something more earnest and dramatic in No 2 in A, perhaps the best of these works.

They are all captured in focused but airy sound, giving a good sense of the Schuman Hall in Jakobstad (Pietarsaari), Finland, some 450km north of Helsinki. Expect no revelations from these pieces. They are, nonetheless, entertaining, effortlessly enjoyable and beautifully performed. **David Threasher**

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Le Dodo ou L'amour au berceau

Marais *Pièces de viole – selections.*

Pièces à une et à trois violes – selections

La Réveuse

Mirare © MIR386 (64' • DDD)



If you're thinking 'ah, just another recording of French viol pieces', think again. You

couldn't be more wrong. This recording by Florence Bolton and theorbist Benjamin Perrot with members of their ensemble *La Réveuse* breaks new ground. The challenges of playing the seven-string bass viol, and the French repertoire in particular, are well known, but Marais himself would have immediately recognised and appreciated Florence Bolton's artistry and commitment to his music. These are sublimely unfettered performances, perfectly judged and yet remarkably improvisatory in spirit. Her sense of timing is ravishing, her close musical rapport with Perrot and colleagues is magical and so it's hardly surprising that the French Ministry of Culture has associated *La Réveuse* with this year's *Année européenne du patrimoine culturel*.

The choice of *pièces* from the fourth (1717) and fifth (1725) books, both fresh and familiar, produces a coherent, cumulative impression of artistic maturity.

In the booklet note, Bolton remarks on Marais's exceptional sensitivity to both the 'colour of sound' and different tonalities: 'His palette, fairly clear-cut in his first books, moves in the last two towards more blended tones, close in spirit to the tonality of the *Fêtes galantes* of Watteau.'

Lively tracks such as 'Le jeu du volant' (shuttlecock), 'Fête champêtres', 'La Biscayenne' and 'La Provençale' conjure a spirit of the out-of-doors, while others – the hauntingly beautiful *rondeaux* in particular (tracks 4, 5, 9 and 16) evoke the nostalgic aspects of Watteau's images. Among the many rarely heard delights are 'La Paraza' (in which the player is given the opportunity to create his or her own version with a series of options) and 'Le Tact', involving virtuoso alternation of left-hand pizzicato and bowed notes, which is enchanting in spite of its technical wizardry.

Listeners will be transfixed by the sublime performances of the F sharp 'Badinage' and 'La Réveuse', popularised in the 1990s by Jordi Savall's performances in the film *Tous les matins du monde*. These new interpretations open our ears to astonishing aural landscapes, and even glimpses of the inner genius of Marin Marais.

If, alas, no mention of Marais and Couperin playing together survives, the classical perfection of their music offers ample evidence of shared values. Perrot's arrangements of two much-loved Couperin pieces exquisitely point this up and make one wonder whether Marais might ever have entertained himself and his patrons with his own versions for the viol.

This exceptional recording will surely rank among my contenders for recording of the year. Personally, I feel as though I've visited Marais's studio and heard the sounds from his window, and these are experiences I shall treasure. **Julie Anne Sadie**

Mozart

'Violin Sonatas, Vol 5'

Violin Sonatas – No 6, K11; No 7, K12;

No 19, K302; No 28, K380; No 35, K526.

Variations on 'La bergère Célimène', K359.

Piano Sonata No 17, K570

Alina Ibragimova *vn* **Cédric Tiberghien** *pf*

Hyperion ® © CDA68175 (121' • DDD)

Recorded live info



If ever a Mozart recording were self-recommending, this is it. The first four volumes of the French-Russian duo's complete sonata cycle came close to my Mozartian ideal. This final instalment,

again juxtaposing early, middle and late works, fulfils every expectation. They play the two fragile early sonatas, composed when the wunderkind was barely out of nappies, with charm, simplicity (no over-sophisticated inflections) and – say, in K11's chuckling contredanse finale – an impish sense of fun; and while Tiberghien inevitably leads the show here, Ibragimova judges to a nicety her little interpolations and echoes. With their seemingly instinctive mutual understanding, the players constantly ensure that there is no whiff of routine in these ingenuous childhood works.

Even Tiberghien and Ibragimova cannot quite convince me of the stylistically dubious posthumous arrangement of the late B flat Piano Sonata, K570. In the *Adagio* and finale, especially, the added violin figuration compromises the music's lean, rarefied grace. The little-known set of variations on a popular French chanson, K359, can seem slight on the page. But, true to form, Tiberghien and Ibragimova bring the music tinglingly alive, with new timings and subtle changes of tone colour and emphasis on repeats. Mozart, a born show-off, would surely have relished the swashbuckling flamboyance Tiberghien brings to the pianistically brilliant Variations 6 and 10.

As to the mature sonatas – each of them a true democracy – it's hard to imagine more delightful or discerning performances. Ibragimova, with her astonishingly varied tonal palette, and Tiberghien combine the wisdom of long experience with a spontaneous joy in music that is so often *opera buffa* by other means. Crucially, both players understand the essentially vocal nature of Mozart's inspiration. If you don't smile at the quickfire banter in K526's opening *Allegro*, amid ever-unpredictable phrasing and shading, you haven't been listening. Grace, wit and delicacy coexist with a quasi-orchestral grandeur and boldness in the opening *Allegro* of K380 while the *Presto* finale of K526 emerges, rightly, as a coruscating double concerto without orchestra, each player vying with the other in virtuosity. Most memorable of all are the slow movements: the wistful G minor *Andante con moto* of K380, and the *Andante* of K526, music at once austere and visionary. Keeping each movement flowing, Tiberghien and Ibragimova distil a quality of rapt inwardness, not least in the quietly shocking harmonic progression that leads back to the main theme in K526.

Occasionally in these works – say, at the fermata in the gentle 'walking' finale of K302 (at 4'19") – the players resist Mozart's invitation for a brief improvised



In the zone: Tanja Tetzlaff and Gunilla Süssmann are superb advocates for Rautavaara's Cello Sonatas

cadenza or a touch of added ornamentation. But, on disc at least, better too little than too much. The recorded balance, as in previous issues, is spot-on, and Misha Donat's detailed notes, going far beyond the obvious, are doubly welcome given that Mozart's violin sonatas are among the least written-about areas of his output. 'A set that will surely become the modern reference recording' wrote David Threasher after Vol 4, a claim I would enthusiastically endorse after this superlative final volume.

Richard Wigmore

Rautavaara

Cello Sonatas – No 1; No 2. Solo Cello Sonata. Polska. Two Preludes and Fugues. Song of my Heart

Tanja Tetzlaff vc **Gunilla Süssmann** pf
Online © ODE1310-2 (68' • DDD)



Rautavaara may have moved away from avant-gardism in favour of mystic neo-Romanticism but the works assembled here show that he never entirely shunned serialism or related techniques, thrusting them into tonally well-behaved pieces long into his career. The composer's single-

movement Cello Sonata No 1 is carpet-bombed by fist-shaped piano clusters before it embarks on a moving process of recovery. The Cello Sonata No 2, like the First, contains examples of the brutalist symmetrical harmonies that were common in Sixties and Seventies Rautavaara.

Both pieces were started in the early Seventies but finished far later. In the First, completed in 2001, Rautavaara's use of an almost runic melody that orbits around the middle of three adjacent notes is telling when considering his relationship to Sibelius. The Second, completed in 1991, grapples with bigger issues. It is an attractively pessimistic piece in which a remarkable central movement – a *moto perpetuo* on the cello beneath which broad, shadowy chords born of an entirely different velocity are laid down by the piano (again, echoes of Sibelius) – prepares the way for the angry confessions of the finale.

The neo-Baroque devices of the Solo Sonata (1969) offer Rautavaara the chance to hang melodies off a single 'anchor' note once more, and to explore ideas of one plane of sound restricting or controlling another (pizzicato 'pegs' underneath broad double-stopped lyricism, for example). This fascinating piece builds on the lessons of the Two Preludes and Fugues (1955) from the composer's student days.

Yes, the Sonata is tricky. No, Tanja Tetzlaff doesn't make it sound so. She can pack a punch, is always spacious, and sometimes sacrifices accuracy of tuning at the altar of expression and line. Her partner Gunilla Süssmann is absolutely in the zone, whether lowering chords into the piano with her arms in the Sonata No 2 and *Song of my Heart* – a refugee from the opera *Aleksis Kivi* – or enlivening passages including the deranged dance that is the *Polska*, a manic, dual-personality polka in which Tetzlaff duets with herself. **Andrew Mellor**

Reich

Pulse^a. Quartet^b

^bColin Currie Group;

^aInternational Contemporary Ensemble
Nonesuch © 7559 79324-3 (31' • DDD)



From the funky maracas in *Four Organs* to the famous pulsing chords that are heard at the beginning of *Music for 18 Musicians*, pulse (or, more accurately, the plural 'pulses'), has become one of the most distinguishing features of Steve Reich's music. Perhaps it's surprising that he took so long to compose a piece directly inspired by it.

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Inspired by Schoenberg's essay, *Brahms the Progressive*, exceptional pianist Pina Napolitano explores the relationships between the music of Brahms and the Second Viennese School



Pina Napolitano's interpretations on this recording reveal fascinating insights into the sometimes surprising links between these musical worlds, hearing Brahms through the ears of the modern Viennese, and bringing to the Second Viennese School elements of Brahmsian romanticism. The release includes Berg's Op.1 *Sonata*, the music unfolding with the sort of fluidity which characterised Brahms' style; Webern's *Variations*, Op. 27, which recall Brahms' motivic connectedness, and Brahms' influential *Klavierstücke* Opp. 118 and 119, among his last works.

The Delta Piano Trio brings its unique insight to the intricate and mysterious music of Lera Auerbach and Dmitri Shostakovich



The Delta Piano Trio has developed a special relationship with composer Lera Auerbach, affording these musicians a unique insight into her music. Auerbach's piano trios, the second of which is entitled, *Tryptych – The Mirror with Three Faces*, are multi-faceted works for which The Delta Piano Trio feels a particular affinity. Auerbach's *Piano Trio* No. 1 reveals audible connections with the music of Shostakovich, and the *Piano Trio* No. 2 by Shostakovich is also featured on the album, ranging between forceful irony and ethereal beauty.



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In fact, *Pulse*, composed in 2015 for winds, strings, piano and electric bass, is as far removed from generic pulse-based Reich music as one could imagine. It begins not with a pulse but with an undulating melodic line in flute, clarinet and violins, almost Copland-esque in its wide-open intervals and subtle blending of major triads. This melody stretches out across two octaves in its opening statement, cushioned by soft chords in lower strings, before gradually reshaping and regenerating itself in various ways throughout the work's 15-minute span.

Soon enough, pulsing patterns are introduced on piano followed by electric bass, and the bright opening becomes increasingly darker and more intense as the opening melody takes on more intense chromatic inflections. The pulse momentarily drops out of the electric bass for a brief middle section that moves to the minor key before the introduction of a final section, which sees a variation of the opening melody heard in augmentation.

Pulse exudes a restrained, valedictory quality that partly stems from the way in which it briefly journeys through the main elements of Reich's language – pulse combined with interlocking and interweaving patterns, melodies that kaleidoscopically reflect each other through canon and imitation, lines that stretch and contract through augmentation and diminution – yet remains at its core a brilliantly conceived and organically self-sufficient work: Reich at his imperious best.

The other work on this recording, *Quartet*, for pairs of pianos and vibraphones, composed in 2013, also looks back in its opening reference to the composer's much earlier *Violin Phase*, but in all other respects is a very different composition to *Pulse*: rhythmically assertive, edgy and full of sharp juxtapositions. Both performances – the former by ICE (International Contemporary Ensemble), the latter by the Colin Currie Group – are excellent.

Pwyll ap Siôn

Schumann

Three String Quartets, Op 41

Stradivari Quartet

RCA Red Seal © 88985 49264-2 (79 • DDD)



Not all the members of the Zurich-based Stradivari Quartet play instruments made by the legendary luthier Antonio Stradivari. Sebastian Bohren uses a violin by Guadagnini, and Lech Antonio Uszynski

a late 17th-century viola from the workshop of Hendrick Willems. Not that it matters, really, for in terms of beauty of tone, purity of intonation and unanimity of ensemble, this foursome does its namesake proud.

Interpretatively, too, there's much to admire. Schumann wrote this trio of quartets as a birthday gift for his beloved wife Clara, composing at white heat – all three were completed in a mere two months during the summer of 1842. No wonder, then, that the passion in these scores often seems to blister on the music's surface. The Stradivari, to their credit, never fail to produce a rich, red-blooded sound, even in the most ferociously difficult passages. Take the scampering finale of the First Quartet, for instance. They're neither as breathtakingly fleet of foot as the Doric nor as breathlessly vigorous as the Zehetmair (on their *Gramophone* Award-winning disc), but their heartiness still conveys a satisfying sense of joyousness. In the similarly boisterous finale of the Third Quartet, the Stradivari dig in with gusto. Here the Doric's quicksilver approach brings Haydn to mind, while the Stradivari make me think of Tchaikovsky, and how much his quartet-writing owes to Schumann.

I am utterly entranced by the Stradivari's ardour in the first movement of the Second Quartet; in their hands the intertwining melodic strands seem to glisten, sunlit. Occasionally the sonorous splendour of their playing becomes a liability, as in the densely contrapuntal development section of the First Quartet's opening *Allegro*. And, in general, I wish the Stradivari paid greater heed to Schumann's dynamic markings. All too frequently they render soft passages as a robust *mezzo-forte*. Take the rapturous beginning of the Third Quartet, for example: it's heartfelt, yes, but would be so much more affecting if played at a true *piano*, as the Zehetmair do.

The Doric and Zehetmair recordings are both essential, though similar in their verve. The Stradivari offer a somewhat more *gemütlich* view, as do the Cherubini (EMI/Warner), Ysaÿe (Aeon/Ysaÿe, 4/04) and Gringolts (Onyx, 1/12) Quartets – and, honestly, I wouldn't want to be without any of them. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Selected comparisons:

Zehetmair Qt (6/03) (ECM) 472 169-2

Doric Qt (12/11) (CHAN) CHAN10692

'Clarinet Fantasies'

Bax Clarinet Sonata Butler Barlow Dale:

Four Characteristic Pieces **Horovitz Sonatina**

Ireland Fantasy-Sonata

Nadia Wilson c/ Martin Butler pf

Prima Facie © PFCD076 (50 • DDD)



The main novelty here is Martin Butler's *Barlow Dale: Four Characteristic Pieces*,

written in 1977 when the composer was just 17. Inspired by the fictional adventures of a feline detective – Barlow Dale, something of a fusion of Sherlock Holmes, Poirot and Dr Finlay – the pieces depict the eponymous hero, a slow-witted Police Inspector, the elegant (Siamese) secretary Miss Honeyflower, and dastardly villain Asiam Rex. It is all light-hearted fun but how nice to see such a trifle still acknowledged and performed by its creator in this premiere recording four decades later.

In the sonatas by Bax (1934) and Ireland (1943), Butler and clarinetist Nadia Wilson face some stiff competition. The Bax remains popular on disc, if no longer in the recital room, with Naxos and Chandos having multiple versions available. Murray Khouri and Michael Collins (in his earlier recording, in an all-Bax programme for Hyperion) remain joint first choices. Wilson and Butler are quicker by nearly a minute compared to the Hyperion, as they are in Horovitz's delightful *Sonatina* (1981). As interpretations, there is not much to choose between them but the main drawback of *Prima Facie*'s newcomer is the flat acoustic and airless, two-dimensional sound.

Much the same applies for Ireland's *Fantasy-Sonata*, an imaginatively constructed single movement with the gravitas of a rather larger work. Wilson and Butler perform it very nicely indeed but, again, this is not the prime recommendation. **Guy Rickards**

Bax, Horovitz, Ireland – selected comparison:

Khouri, Pettinger (6/92) (CONT) CCD1038

Bax, Ireland – selected comparison:

Collins, McHale (6/12) (CHAN) CHAN10704

Johnson, Martineau (7/94) (ASV) CDDCA891

Bax – selected comparison:

Collins, Brown (5/96) (HYPE) CDA66807

Horovitz – selected comparison:

Collins, McHale (6/13) (CHAN) CHAN10758

'Home'

Schubert Arpeggione Sonata, D821.

Nacht und Träume, D827 Schumann Drei Fantasiestücke, Op 73. Adagio and Allegro,

Op 70. Du bist wie eine Blume, Op 25 No 24

Soltani Persian Fire Dance Vali Persian

Folk Songs

Kian Soltani vc Aaron Pilsan pf

DG © 479 8100GH (79 • DDD)

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Richard Bratby explores piano trios from the 18th century to the 21st, and revels in the range of musical invention



Sparkling performances: the Van Baerle Trio impress in Beethoven piano trios

When **Beethoven** throws down an E flat major chord, something big is usually about to happen – and we're not just talking about an *Eroica* or an *Emperor*. An E flat major crotchet followed by an exuberant upward flourish is how the 24-year-old composer opens his Piano Trio, Op 1 No 1, of 1795: the springboard into the greatest adventure of all. So imagine the pressure, for an interpreter, that hindsight brings to bear on those opening bars – the sublimated grandeur; the weight of expectation. And then, if you're the Van Baerle Trio on this joyous new recording, forget all about it. The overwhelming quality of this new disc is a quite irresistible freshness: young man's music, played with an inquisitive spirit, a spring-like clarity and (when necessary) a daredevil verve. The finale of the C minor Op 1 No 3 has an almost Hungarian flamboyance and fire.

It sounds distinctly different, and I initially checked the booklet to see whether or not this young Dutch trio was playing on period instruments. More fool me: the lucid, luminous but slightly clipped piano sound, which makes pianist Hannes Minnaar's virtuoso flourishes glint like pearls, has little in common with the attack of a fortepiano. No, apparently he's playing on a straight-strung Chris Maene concert grand, a new instrument that incorporates early 19th-century

design principles and which – on the evidence of this recording – rather elegantly solves all the balance problems inherent in a piano trio written before the evolution of the modern concert grand. The Van Baerles take its possibilities and run with them. These sparkling performances are as acoustically well balanced as they are inventive.

It almost seems unfair, in fact, to turn to an early Romantic trio recorded without that advantage – and it needs to be said straight off that the trio of Marie-Elisabeth Hecker, Antje Weithaas and pianist Martin Helmchen approach **Schubert's** mighty E flat Trio with seriousness and refinement. They have the measure of Schubert's proportions; and from the opening gestures, with Weithaas's violin quavers buzzing quietly away in the background as Helmchen and Hecker exchange thematic ideas, this is a reading that combines symphonic scope with a deeply romantic sense of characterisation and emotional narrative. Imagine *Winterreise* and the *Great C* major Symphony combined, in chamber music that's anything but small-scale.

But – and this isn't a criticism, just an observation – the two string players have such an attractive sound and there's such subtlety of shade in their playing that you do wish slightly that the tone of Helmchen's piano didn't dominate

the texture to quite such an extent. It's the nature of the beast – in an early 19th-century trio, a modern concert grand is always going to have a slightly unnatural advantage, though it's less of an issue in Hecker and Helmchen's thoughtful account of the Arpeggione Sonata. Warning: the track timings in the booklet are wildly incorrect.

Leap forwards into the 21st century, and it's clear that **Cecilia McDowall** grasps the nature of the piano trio as a modern medium, even if there's something distinctly Romantic about her inspiration. Her single-movement trio *Cavatina at Midnight* (2008) imagines the cavatina of Beethoven's Op 130 encountering the nightingale that duetted with the cellist Beatrice Harrison, and the piano creates an atmospheric haze of sound as the strings wheel and chirrup above. In the Japanese-inspired *Colour of Blossoms*, the piano's jangling bass clusters become the echoing of gongs and temple bells.

Trio Derazey find the core of stillness in the music as well as its fantasy, and the individual players are equally sympathetic to McDowall's imagination in shorter works for smaller combinations, including the Rilke-based *Strange violin, are you following me?* and *The Night Trumpeter*, which adds woodwinds and a trumpet to the trio for a fantasy on Rose Tremain's *Music and Silence*, with hints of both Stravinsky and Messiaen. The pieces in this collection are perhaps more effective heard individually than as a sequence – they tend towards the reflective – but there are riches here that deserve to be enjoyed beyond the closed world of contemporary music.

And that goes double for the two piano trios of Russian-born **Lera Auerbach**, presented here in what, if they aren't premiere recordings (the booklet doesn't say, but it looks likely), are surely definitive accounts by the Delta Piano Trio – another highly impressive Dutch ensemble. If McDowall is understated, Auerbach is extrovert, eclectic and unafraid to go large. Are we still allowed to use the term 'postmodern'? What's intriguing about these two works – the epigrammatic Trio No 1 (1994) and the considerably larger *Triptych* (2012) – is how, for all Auerbach's gleeful musical bricolage (her language ranges from mock-baroque bustle to Prokofiev-like constructivist anarchy), there's still an unmistakable sense of this music fitting into the Russian tradition of Shostakovich, whose Second Trio, in a vivid, wide-

eyed performance, opens the disc. There's definitely something serious going on beneath the surface here and the Delta Piano Trio manage to find it – even while throwing themselves wholeheartedly into Auerbach's seagull cries, motorbike drones and wobbly imitations of a musical saw. You'll need a sense of humour, but I found it irresistible.

Shostakovich also features on **3x3 Live**, the final release here – the single-movement Trio No 1 that he wrote in his teens, performed by the young Russians Lukas Geniušas, Aylen Pritchin and Alexander Buzlov, and recorded live at the Moscow Conservatory. An unhappy earlier encounter on disc with Geniušas and Pritchin had lowered my expectations. But here – as well as fiery intensity and an old school, wide-bore Russian playing style that in the past has occasionally tipped into coarseness – they bring a sense of intimacy and a tremulous sweetness of sound that's actually highly affecting.

And it's not as if the main work on this Melodiya disc – Weinberg's powerful Piano Trio of 1945 – is over-recorded, either. The booklet notes are useless but this performance speaks for itself – taut, ardent, characterful, and very much in the epic manner. Their account of the Ravel Trio came as a pleasant surprise too: there's a ritzy, café-trio swing to the opening paragraph that's quite delicious. Plus Geniušas, on piano, really makes those martial trumpets blast through Ravel's tempestuous finale. Emotion recalled in tranquillity? Hardly – it's the sound of a genre, and a tradition, in rude good health. **G**

THE RECORDINGS



Beethoven Cpte Piano Trios, Vol 1
Van Baerle Trio
Challenge Classics (P) CC72765



Schubert Pf Trio No 2, etc
Weithaas, Hecker, Helmchen
Alpha (P) ALPHA284



McDowall 'Colour of Blossoms'
Trio Derazey
Deux-Elles (P) DXL1171



Auerbach, Shostakovich Piano Trios
Delta Pf Trio
Odradek (P) ODRCD350



'3x3 Live'
Pritchin, Buzlov, Geniušas
Melodiya (P) MELCD100 2491



You can tell a great deal about performance quality from one crucial consideration:

timing. In the context of Schubert's Arpeggione Sonata as played by Kian Soltani and Aaron Pilsan, it's in the first movement. Listen to 2'58", an arpeggio piano chord at the close of the exposition, then the pause before the repeated opening – sheer perfection. No one on disc judges it better. The overriding impression is of a watertight musical partnership, one's attention divided equally between cellist and pianist. Soltani was born in Bregenz in 1992 into a musical Persian family and has all the qualities needed to win consistent critical acclaim, namely innate musicality, a yielding, svelte tone, an agile bowing arm and a skilful deployment of varied vibrato. Listening to him is a great pleasure.

The programme is especially well chosen. Schumann is represented by two works, the Op 73 *Fantasiestücke* and the Op 70 *Adagio and Allegro* in A flat, music that illustrates not only the 'Florestan' and 'Eusebius' aspects of the composer's own muse but parallel qualities in this particular musical partnership, languid lyricism and fiery attack. Both composers are additionally represented by beautiful – and superbly played – song transcriptions, Schubert by 'Nacht und Träume', Schumann by 'Du bist wie eine Blume'.

And then there's the Persian element, Reza Vali's seven *Persian Folk Songs* ('Set No 16 C' as we're told), love songs by 'the Bartók of Iran', as Soltani thinks of him, though I was put more in mind of Janáček, certainly in the first piece, 'Longing'. The third piece ends with a *Tristan* quote and the programme as a whole concludes with Soltani's own unaccompanied *Persian Fire Dance*, which would do nicely in recital as a follow-on from Kodály's Solo Sonata, very much the same worlds and a work that with any luck Kian Soltani will offer us before too long. A beautiful programme, superbly recorded. **Rob Cowan**

'Music in a Cold Climate'

'Sounds of Hansa Europe'

H Albert Das Leid ist hier **Baltzar** John come kiss me now. A Prelude for the Violin **D Becker** Sonata a 2 **Bertali** Sonata a 4 **Brade** Der heilig Berg. Peggie Bell. Ein Schottisch Tantz **Holborne** Pavan, 'The Image of Melancholly' **Keeling** Northern Soul **Kempis** Symphonia 1 a 4 **Schildt** Paduana, 'Lagrima' **Schop** Lachrimae Pavaen **Sommer** Der 8. Psalm. Paduana, 'Susanne un jour' **Staden** Sonata 31 a 4

In Echo / Gawain Glenton cornett

Delphian (P) DCD34206 (68' • DDD)



In Echo have been assembled by cornettist Gawain Glenton from

mainstays of the English Cornett & Sackbut Ensemble, Florilegium, Fretwork, the Taverner Players, I Fagiolini and the Bach Players. Their debut album explores music associated with the Hanseatic League of cities dotted around the North Sea and the Baltic. Almost all works are by little-known authors active in the 17th century, and the eclectic choices have been sequenced intelligently to cultivate a well-paced variety of textures, moods, styles and shifting combinations of instruments.

A few pieces feature five or more players, such as a beguiling sonata of sonorous depth by Antonio Bertali that highlights rapier-like interplay between Glenton, Emily White (sackbut) and Bojan Čičić (violin). Blink and you will miss a tiny sorrowful piece by Schütz's younger cousin Heinrich Albert, followed without pause by Johann Sommer's pavan based on Lassus's chanson 'Susanne un jour'. At the smaller end of the scale, Lübeck-born Thomas Baltzar's solo violin variations on 'John come kiss me now' is played with consummate skill by Čičić. Glenton and White deliver impeccable divisions and a kaleidoscope of colours in a substantial sonata by the itinerant Hamburger Dietrich Becker. Silas Wollston provides a judicious account of a pavan by Melchior Schildt based on Dowland's famous tune from *Lachrimae* (both musicians were employed at the court of Danish king Christian IV), which leads into Anthony Holborne's exquisite pavan *The Image of Melancholly* played beautifully by cornett and four-part strings.

The inquisitive ensemble has also commissioned Andrew Keeling's new work *Northern Soul*, organised into four 'walks' inspired by the composer's rambles around the Lake District; the extraordinary timbres of a newly built reconstruction of a rare English Renaissance organ emerge to the forefront and the cumulative effect seems as if slithers of Gabrieli, Messiaen and King Crimson converge on a fairground ride. **David Vickers**

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Ginette Neveu

Tully Potter recalls one of the greatest violinists to have emerged from France, a player whose career was cut short just as it was blossoming in a plane crash in the Azores

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, just as classical music was recovering after the war, we suffered a number of grievous losses. None was more shattering than the death of Ginette Neveu, aged 30, in a plane crash on October 28, 1949. In an international career effectively lasting only four years and still approaching its flood, she had won the hearts of critics, audiences and record buyers.

'Magnificent' is the word that comes to mind when trying to define her musicianship: the tomboy who loved cycling and swimming grew into a tall young woman with the physical and mental strength to conquer the most challenging concertos. Her fine tone, well-schooled technique and beautiful portamento fitted her naturally for Romantic music, but she patiently disciplined herself in the Classical and Baroque literature.

Music ran in her family: her great-uncle was the organist Charles-Marie Widor, her father was an amateur string player and her mother a violinist. Born in Paris on August 11, 1919, she began violin lessons aged five with her mother, transferred to Line Talluel and at seven, made her début with the Colonne Orchestra under Gabriel Pierné, playing Bruch's G minor Concerto. Her further progress was attended by prizes, the admiration of teachers Jules Boucherit, George Enescu and Carl Flesch, and her first European tours. In 1937 came her New York recital debut.

The war held her back, but in 1945 her career opened up, with a sensational London recital – elder brother Jean was now her piano partner – and a British tour with Roger Désormière, followed by more successes here in 1946. Most of 1947 was spent in North

and South America; and 1948 took her to Australia, the United States and various European countries. A highlight was the Beethoven Concerto with Herbert von Karajan and the Vienna Philharmonic. In 1949 she appeared at the Edinburgh Festival and she planned important recordings and a South African tour.

The catastrophe that wiped her out even destroyed her violins, a 1730

Omobono Stradivari and a GB Guadagnini – only the scroll of the latter survived.

The tragedy is that Neveu was playing so well in those few post-war years. Ida Haendel's memory that her vibrato was wider before the war is borne out by her 1938-39 recordings, where the vibrato often catches the microphone in a rather fluttery way – the main work is the Richard Strauss Sonata, nicely done but not with the poise of, say, Leonid Kogan. In the post-war recordings, the vibrato is more under control.

It is futile to dwell on might-have-beens, opportunities to

record her which were missed, works central to her repertoire which went undocumented. What we have is varied and of excellent quality. The epic 1945 Sibelius Concerto, completed in one long day which left Neveu with chin and neck almost bleeding from the pressure of her violin, is often praised. The outer movements, well conducted by Susskind, are powerful, while in the *Adagio* the tone is pure even under quite heavy bowing.

Having studied composition with Nadia Boulanger, Neveu had a well-developed feeling for structure. Take the 1946 Brahms Concerto with Issay Dobrowen, where her timing for the opening movement, up to the start of the cadenza, is 16'42", comparing well with such masters as Huberman,

*Her fine tone, well-schooled technique
and beautiful portamento fitted her
naturally for Romantic music*

DEFINING MOMENTS

• 1928 – *Shows prodigious talent at the Paris Conservatoire*

After working with George Enescu, Neveu wins first prize at the Ecole Supérieure de Musique and the City of Paris Prix d'honneur. In 1930 she enters Jules Boucherit's Conservatoire class and nine months later takes a first prize, aged 11, prompting comparisons with Henryk Wieniawski.

• 1931 – *Carl Flesch takes her under his wing*

In the Vienna International Competition she comes fourth. Carl Flesch is so impressed by her playing that he offers a full scholarship. Neveu cannot take it up for two years but studies with him for four years in Berlin and Belgium and continues to consult him.

• 1935 – *A triumph in Warsaw causes controversy*

Neveu beats 26-year-old David Oistrakh into second place in the Wieniawski Competition in Warsaw, creating a stir with Ravel's *Tzigane*. Even French juror Gabriel Bouillon alleges anti-Semitism but Oistrakh is magnanimous. Neveu tours Germany twice and visits the Soviet Union.

• 1940 – *Parisian triumphs in war-torn Paris*

She refuses to tour Germany despite lucrative offers. In occupied Paris, she plays Beethoven's Concerto for the first time with Paul Paray in 1941, premieres Poulenc's Sonata, dedicated to her, with the composer in 1943 and Federico Elizalde's Concerto in 1944.

• 1949 – *A glorious career cut down in its prime*

En route to America with brother Jean, their plane crashes into the peak of Algarvia, on San Miguel in the Azores. His body is never recovered, Ginette's is misidentified and initially buried at Mulhouse, Alsace. She is finally laid to rest in Paris's Père Lachaise Cemetery.



Busch, Szigeti and Heifetz – in live versions with Desormière and Schmidt-Isserstedt she adds about half a minute. Since her day, slowcoaches have abounded in this concerto. It seems to me that her interpretation of the Brahms had just about settled, whereas live recordings of the Beethoven with Rosbaud and Van Otterloo indicate that she had not yet made final decisions on tempi or choice of cadenzas. In the *Larghetto* she is ethereal but without the intensity of Busch or Kogan. Another orchestral recording with Dobrowen, Chausson's *Poème*, is wonderfully sustained, with a magical atmosphere and the kind of portamento that is a lost art today.

Jean Neveu, a pupil of Yves Nat and a fine pianist, was less extrovert than she, yet he plays up to her manfully in a totally idiomatic Debussy Sonata and a splendid live Brahms D minor. He supports her sympathetically in Josef Suk's Four Pieces and Ravel's *Tzigane*, special favourites of hers, and assorted encores which display aspects of her technique. She always worried about staccato, and Elgar's *La Capricieuse* was among three pieces rejected and destroyed, yet Dinicu's *Hora Staccato* is among the best.

Yes, she was magnificent, and everything she recorded has something to tell us about the special qualities of the violin. **G**

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



Brahms. Sibelius Violin Concertos **Philharmonia Orchestra / Issay Dobrowen, Walter Susskind**
Warner Classics mono
Ⓜ 476 8302
Recorded at Abbey Road Studios, London, 1945-6

Instrumental



Harriet Smith welcomes Nikolai Lugansky's Rachmaninov Preludes:

'He has the requisite technique in spades, and most importantly he is emotionally completely attuned to this music' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 89](#)



Charlotte Gardner enjoys a solo disc from Michael Barenboim:

'Shimmering figures sound like little fractals of sunlight catching the floating dust particles – it's incredibly atmospheric' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 90](#)

JS Bach

English Suite No 1, BWV806 – Prelude. French Suites: No 1, BWV812 – Gigue; No 3, BWV814 – Menuet; No 5, BWV816 – Allemande; No 6, BWV817 – Sarabande; Courante; Polonaise. Keyboard Partitas: No 1, BWV825 – Gigue; No 2, BWV826 – Sinfonia; Sarabande; No 4, BWV828 – Aria; Allemande; No 5, BWV829 – Tempo di minuetto; No 6, BWV830 – Corrente

Fred Thomas *pf*

Odradek © ODRCD357 (53' • DDD)



Given Fred Thomas's multifaceted talents as a genre- and boundary-blurring

composer and improviser, one would expect his first all-Bach solo piano release to embody a specific concept or angle, as indeed is the case. Thomas assembles a selection of individual dance-based movements from Bach's Partitas, *English Suites* and *French Suites* and puts them together in a running order with the ingenuity of a seasoned DJ. What is more, Thomas enhances the character of each piece through various microphone placements. For example, the C minor Partita's Sinfonia and Sarabande and B minor *French Suite*'s Minuet are captured at a distance with ample room tone, whereas the E major *French Suite*'s Polonaise features the kind of close-up focus typical of Glenn Gould's Bach recordings.

To be sure, you don't get acoustic changes within selections vis-à-vis Gould's Sibelius and Scriabin 'acoustic orchestration' experiments, yet the point is that ambience strongly factors into how one perceives a performance, much as theatrical lighting enhances onstage drama during individual scenes and transitions. The warm sonic patina surrounding Thomas's beautifully ruminative way with the A major *French Suite*'s improvisatory Prelude assiduously gives way to a mellower, more muted ambience in the D major Partita's Allemande that makes

the music sound like an interior monologue. By contrast, the juxtaposition of Thomas's incisive and 'zoomed-in' D major Partita's Aria and D minor *French Suite*'s Gigue performances reveal these works as two sides of the same coin.

It makes no sense to evaluate Thomas's programmatic mixing and matching in the context of complete Partita and Suite recordings, except to say that the serious care and thought characterising his acoustic choices happily extend into his pianism. As a consequence, Thomas's concept transcends the gimmick. **Jed Distler**

JS Bach

Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr', BWV717.

Fantasy, BWV562. Fugue, BWV575. Concerto, BWV595 (after Johann Ernst). Die Kunst der Fuge, BWV1080 – Contrapunctus I. Passacaglia and Fugue, BWV582. Preludes and Fugues – BWV534; BWV546. Trio super Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr', BWV664. Valet will ich dir geben, BWV736

Joseph Kelemen *org*

Oehms © OC465 (70' • DDD)

Played on the Christoph Treutmann organ of the Klosterkirche Grauhof, Lower Saxony, Germany



This is solid, heavy, monumental Bach. The Hungarian organist Joseph

Kelemen adds weight to this programme of Bach works which are predominantly in C minor with registrations – fully detailed in the booklet – which give a thorough workout to the hefty 16ft Principal on the Hauptwerk, the chorus reeds and this historic organ's decidedly meaty pleno.

This is an approach which works well enough for BWV546 with its massive, colonnaded Prelude and its ominously plodding Fugue, although one tires of quite such a thick sound with the inevitable 32ft pedal reed anchoring down the final chords. There is also the occasional jarring of the organ's Kellner/Bach tuning to contend with.

The Fantasia, BWV562, is given a certain regal flair through the searing chorus reeds and Kelemen's stately tempo, while the stand-alone Fugue, BWV575, seems to try its hardest to sound more solemn than it really is. For the Passacaglia and Fugue, Kelemen restricts himself to a single registration, merely moving from Hauptwerk to Oberwerk for a single episode (4'55"–6'02"). This, coupled with an articulation which largely keeps the individual notes apart and cuts the lines up into unjoined-up dots of sound, does nothing to endear this performance to me.

The two preludes on *Allein Gott in der Höh' sei Ehr'* add a welcome touch of brightness and energy. The Ernst Concerto transcription is doubly welcome for being in a major key and focusing on the charming softer flute stops of the 1737 Christoph Treutmann organ of the Grauhof Klosterkirche. A change of tonal centre for the F minor Prelude continues the emphasis on lighter stops, with some delicate little flutes exposed in the final bars, but the weight comes back on with a vengeance in the Fugue.

If you like your Bach chiselled from granite and magisterially seated on a mighty pedestal, this disc is definitely for you. **Marc Rochester**

Beethoven

Diabelli Variations, Op 120

Martin Helmchen *pf*

Alpha © ALPHA386 (55' • DDD)



No sooner does Alpha release Filippo Gorini's solo debut CD

featuring Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations* than the same label issues another set of *Diabellis* in weirdly close proximity, this time with Martin Helmchen. Talk about marketing amnesia! In any event, Helmchen's commanding pianism and



Composer and improviser Fred Thomas brings serious care and thought to his unique programme of Bach dance movements

perceptive musicianship hold their own in a competitive catalogue.

Helmchen follows his brisk and energetic dispatch of Anton Diabelli's waltz theme with an opening march variation that manages to be *maestoso* yet animated at the same time. He controls Var 2's broken *leggiermente* chords with the utmost precision, bringing the dissonances to the fore, and eloquently addresses the *dolce* directive in Vars 3 and 4. Var 5's repeated-note phrases have a bouncy lightness that Gorini doesn't quite match, although the latter's ferocity and grit in Vars 7 and 8 differ from Helmchen's cooler vantage point. In the lyrical Var 8, Helmchen's shimmer and transparency contrast with Gorini's broader expressive gait. Helmchen brilliantly sprints through Var 10's rapid staccato chords, while really making those few moments of legato articulation distinct. He generates riveting tension in Var 11 by ever so slightly holding back at the ends of certain phrases, in contrast to Gorini's more generalised execution.

Gorini is relatively heavy and plodding in the humorous Var 13, whereas Helmchen imbues the music's question-and-answer trajectory with a sense of surprise and

comic timing that I have not heard since Charles Rosen's classic recording. While Var 14 is on the slow side, Helmchen's sustaining power and rapt concentration take your breath away, as do his amazingly lithe and supple repeated chords in the *scherzando* Var 15. To be sure, Helmchen telegraphs the sudden tempo changes in Var 21 that Gorini makes more abrupt, and why his fussy tapering with Var 22's gruff tribute to Mozart's *Don Giovanni*? The *minore* triumvarate Vars 29-31 stands out for Helmchen's long lines and classical reserve, while his pinpoint contrapuntal clarity in the penultimate fugue (Var 32) is strikingly antipodal to Gorini's faster pace and exultant abandon.

In sum, the overall high distinction of Helmchen's *Diabellis* overrides my few quibbles. I look forward to Alpha's next *Diabelli* Variations release in six months' time. **Jed Distler**

Selected comparison:

Gorini (10/17) (ALPH) ALPHA296

Chopin

Complete Mazurkas

Eugène Mursky *pf*

Profil © ② PH16100 (142' • DDD)



In a decade of particularly fine recordings of the Chopin Mazurkas,

Eugène Mursky's set of 57 can more than hold its own. Imagination and refinement, aided by Hänssler's lifelike sound, characterise this 10th volume of a series devoted to all of the music of Chopin, begun in 2004.

A case could be made for the Mazurkas as the ultimate test of the best Chopin-players and, of the myriad qualities required by that treasure trove of dances, rhythm is certainly most crucial. The outstanding characteristic of Mursky's interpretations is that, despite a wonderful, breathing rubato, one can imagine each Mazurka danced. Within this sure-footed kinaesthetic realm, Mursky works his magic, lingering at the end of a phrase just long enough to capture its poetry before preparing the next gesture. Listening to the natural physicality of these readings, I kept recalling Makarova and Baryshnikov's exquisite realisation of the Mazurkas in Robbins's *Other Dances*.

Mursky also has a keen ear for the subtle implications of Chopin's rich harmony. The plangent C sharp minor Mazurka (Op 50 No 3) achieves its eloquence through the delicate foregrounding of intricate polyphony. The raucous bagpipe drones of the C major (Op 56 No 2) and E major (Op 6 No 3), vividly characterised in all their rusticity, are shown to be the foundation for the exotic dissonances that transpire above. Mursky isn't prone to weepiness, even in the most poignantly lyrical of the Mazurkas. This degree of reserve lends Chopin's more tragic utterances a touching dignity. And if you share my soft spot for young Chopin, the selection of early Mazurkas that follows the canonic set will delight you.

Listening to these bracing, charming and varied Mazurkas, each imbued with the spirit of the dance, one is struck by how few collections of these may claim similar attributes. Mursky's readings can confidently be placed alongside other distinctive performances of recent vintage, including those of Pavel Kolesnikov (Hyperion, A/16), Janusz Olejniczak (Fryderyk Chopin Institute, 11/16) and Dmitri Alexeev (FCI, 12/15). **Patrick Rucker**

Chopin

'Ghosts'

Étude, Op 10 No 6. Preludes, Op 28. Scherzo No 2, Op 31. Waltzes - No 3, Op 34 No 2; No 9, Op 69 No 1; No 10, Op 69 No 2

Nino Gvetadze *pf*

Challenge Classics (P) CC72768
(67' • DDD/DSD)



Nino Gvetadze, a new name to me, is a Georgian pianist (b1981, Tbilisi) who

makes her home in Amsterdam. Chopin recitals on disc are numberless and any pianist faces stiff competition in a crowded marketplace whatever the programme one chooses – and whatever one decides to call it. This one is called 'Ghosts' for reasons that escape me, but then I don't share Gvetadze's view that any of Chopin's music conjures up 'a ghostly journey' in which 'suddenly, the soul wakes up and waltzes into space'.

Though the disc begins with the Preludes, I elected to start with the E flat minor Étude, among the most sombre and subdued of Opp 10 and 25. The frequent intakes of breath, the deliberate phrasing and general air of introspection betoken a carefully prepared studio recording. The same is true of the sequence of three

waltzes which follow. The B flat minor Scherzo is a less cautious affair, a performance with a compelling narrative and Gvetadze producing a warm, rounded tone in the middle register (albeit contrasted by an over-brilliant upper treble at *ff*).

The Preludes are a mixed bag. No 2 in A minor is unusually slow (2'36") but rather effective, as is No 20 in C minor; No 3's swirling left-hand semiquavers are over-pedalled; No 4 in E minor suffers from exaggerated rubato. I turned to a trio of historic recordings to remind myself how these pieces sound with playing of a more distinct personality. Cortot, for instance, in 1926 plays the G sharp minor Prélude at the prescribed *presto* throughout (there are no *rits* or *ralls* marked as Gvetadze has it); Moiseiwitsch, recorded in 1948, keeps the 'Raindrop' at a steady pace (4'53" compared to Gvetadze's enervating 5'52"); while Robert Lortat gives us, among others, a fabulous C sharp minor Prelude (No 10) in his underrated survey from 1928. That said, there is some lovely playing here and Gvetadze is clearly a musician of taste and intelligence. Whether this recital amounts to more than a calling card and will raise her profile must remain a moot point.

Jeremy Nicholas

L Couperin

'Dances from the Bauyn Manuscript'

Suites - in A; in D minor; in G minor. Allemande Grave, M67. Chaconne, M78. Chaconne ou Passacaille, M96. Tombeau de Mr de Blancrocher, M81. Pavanne, M120

Pavel Kolesnikov *pf*

Hyperion (P) CDA68224 (79' • DDD)



For his latest Hyperion release, the immensely talented Pavel Kolesnikov has

taken up an extraordinarily daunting challenge. In his decision to record Louis Couperin, he has chosen a corner of the French 17th-century harpsichord literature perhaps least susceptible to translation to other instruments. He has gone to considerable lengths to pull it off, including the use of two separate actions of distinct character in the Yamaha CFX concert grand he plays. One certainly understands the motivation. Louis, greatest of all the Couperins save for his nephew François, is a fascinating composer. What survives of his strikingly original and often dissonant music spans scarcely a decade of his all-too-brief life.

Of particular interest are Couperin's quasi-improvisatory unmeasured preludes, a legacy of the Renaissance lutenists that would become a special province of the French *clavecinistes*. But it may be these characteristic pieces, structurally and texturally dependent on the rich overtones of the loosely strung harpsichord, that sacrifice most when transferred to the piano, with its taut steel strings and greatly reduced overtones. The unmeasured preludes that open the D minor and A major suites here come across more as schematic diagrams of pitches than surges of emotion, enhanced by the sympathetic vibration of strings.

The dances face similar impediments. Translating their precise, lean, sure-footed lines to the piano seems the equivalent of attempting to reproduce a fine 17th-century engraving using a felt-tip marker. Kolesnikov varies the tempos of the dances. No one would mistake one of his sarabandes for a gigue. But somehow the dances' innate character remains elusive. Importation, however subtle, of the piano's greater dynamic spectrum hinders rather than helps, obscuring more than it clarifies.

Very few pianists of Kolesnikov's generation share his abundance of intelligence, sensitivity, imagination and sheer instrumental mastery. I look forward to hearing him again, and soon, in repertory that allows his manifold gifts to blossom and take flight. **Patrick Rucker**

Debussy · Messiaen

Debussy Préludes, Book 2

Messiaen Huit Préludes

Célimène Daudet *pf*

NoMadMusic (P) NMM046 (78' • DDD)



Célimène Daudet is a sensitive and evocative French pianist, trained

at the conservatoires of Aix-en-Provence, Lyon and Paris, with a taste for multi-disciplinary projects. Her latest release plausibly demonstrates the deep connection she sees between French music's great iconoclast, Olivier Messiaen, and his predecessor, Claude Debussy.

Daudet's performances of Messiaen's *Préludes*, from the most extended, the nearly nine-minute 'Bells of Anguish and Tears of Farewell', to the fleeting 'The Light Number', at barely two minutes, impart the feeling of sensations grasped from the air, sparkling and evanescent, which are tasted and savoured to the fullest, before being released again into the ether.



Pavel Kolesnikov turns his attention to the fascinating music of Louis Couperin

Debussy's *Préludes*, which may seem more substantive due to their greater familiarity, are equally flavourful. 'La puerta del vino' is given beautiful shape and narrative flow, while 'La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune' seems to emanate a silvery glow.

Despite the maturity and sophistication of Daudet's conceptions, it is difficult to escape the sense of still greater things in store. I can't wait. **Patrick Rucker**

Debussy · Stravinsky

Debussy *La mer* (arr Lucien Garban) **Stravinsky**

The Rite of Spring (arr Vladimir Leyetchkiss)

Ralph van Raat *pf*

Naxos (M) 8 573576 (58' • DDD)



Behold Debussy's *La mer* and Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*: two landmark 20th-century

scores that changed the veneer of orchestration, each 'de-orchestrated', so to speak, in the form of a virtuoso solo piano tour de force, in contrast to the composers' respective, relatively utilitarian one-piano-four-hands arrangements.

Lucien Garban essentially transformed *La mer* into a Debussy piano piece, making textural choices that are akin to the

composer's keyboard idiom. In 'De l'aube à midi sur la mer', for example, the initial animated build-up (fig 2, around 1'09") evokes the gamelan-like polyrhythmic layering in 'Pagodes' from *Estampes*. The playful triplet motifs of 'Jeux de vagues' relate to similarly scampering passages in *L'isle joyeuse*, while the rapid flourishes leaping from one register to the next throughout 'Dialogue du vent et de la mer' are right out of the *Préludes* Book II playbook. Given Ralph van Raat's formidable reputation as a new music champion, his ability to clarify foreground and background vagaries and sharp rhythmic precision do not surprise. That said, I prefer the more distant yet stylishly resonant sound of Lydia Jardon's recording (AR Ré-Sé), together with her more animated tempos and suppler response to the composer's sudden mood shifts.

I suspect that *The Rite of Spring* is more van Raat's cup of tea. He brings plenty of motoric momentum to the table, yet is always cognisant of the melodic components superimposed upon repeating rhythmic cells. This is particularly apparent in the Introduction's chattering counterpoint and in the pianist's deft juggling of the broken bass octaves, middle-register repeated notes and darting woodwind licks in 'Dance of the Earth'. And in

'The Mystical Circles of the Young Girls', van Raat generates a lovely give and take between the luscious repeated chords and the rarely emphasised tune in the left hand. In other words, van Raat is giving you the music behind the manifesto, while effortlessly dispatching the awesome demands of Vladimir Leyetchkiss's keyboard deployment, save for one or two spots in 'Dances of the Young Girls' where you simply must slow down to grab the notes. And speaking of notes, van Raat provides his own excellent and informative booklet commentary. **Jed Distler**

Debussy – selected comparison:

Jardon (ARRE) AR20011

Liszt

'Complete Piano Music, Vol 48'

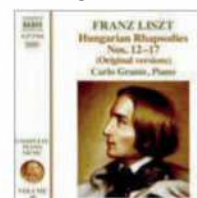
Hungarian Rhapsodies, S242 – Nos 12-17

(original versions). **Ungarische**

Nationalmelodien, S243. Rapsodie hongroise, S244. Pusztá Wehmut (A pusztá keserve), S246

Carlo Grante *pf*

Naxos (M) 8 573784 (59' • DDD)



First, some title disambiguation. The 'original versions' of *Hungarian Rhapsodies*

Nos 12-17 recorded here are six of the *Magyar Dalok/Magyar Rapszódíák*, published in 1846. Liszt would revisit this material, make substantial revisions and publish the results in 1851 and 1853 as the first 15 of the *Rapsodies hongroises*, the form in which they are most familiar today. Because Liszt also reordered the series, there is no direct numerical correlation between the two sets. No 12 of the earlier set recorded here became the trio of *Hungarian Rhapsody* No 5, No 13 became No 15 in the final series, and so on.

One of this CD's attractions is the light it casts on Liszt's creative process. It demonstrates Liszt's ongoing practice of distillation and refinement before his material, already considerably developed, achieved what he considered to be its definitive form. In one of his prefaces, Liszt compares this process to the common 19th-century practice of novelists releasing successive editions of their work. In Liszt's case, the final versions evidence extraordinary advances in both musical cohesion and technical accessibility.

Carlo Grante copes manfully with the often unwieldy demands of these pieces. The alternative version of the Tenth *Hungarian Rhapsody*, without the signature glissandos, has an appealing dash. 'Longing for the Puszta', an adaptation of a song by Gizycka to a Lenau text, revisits the trope of pining despair familiar from the *lassán* sections of the minor-key Rhapsodies.

Patrick Rucker

Liszt

'Souvenirs'

Frühlingsnacht, S568. Glanes de Woronince, S249. Hungarian Rhapsodies, S244 - No 5; No 11; No 12. La leggerezza, S144 No 3. Liebeslied, S566. Liebestraum, S541 No 3. Rhapsodie espagnole, S254. Soirée de Vienne, S427 No 6

Aleksandra Mikulska pf

Genuin © GEN18494 (83') • DDD



The young Polish pianist Aleksandra Mikulska has studied in Karlsruhe, at the

International Piano Academy of Imola and with Arie Vardi in Hanover. Her new release assembles an attractive programme of Liszt pieces under the title 'Souvenirs'.

It is a pleasure to hear the seldom-encountered *Gleanings of Woronince*, Liszt's memento of the weeks he spent with Carolyne zu Sayn-Wittgenstein at her eponymous estate in the Ukraine, given so sympathetic a reading. The song transcriptions, Schumann's 'Du meine

Seele, du mein Herz' and 'Überm Garten durch die Lüfte' and Liszt's own 'O Lieb!', are persuasive in their understated earnestness, with melodies effortlessly articulated amid the elaborated accompaniment figuration. Mikulska's imaginative realisation of the ubiquitous sixth *Soirée de Vienne* sparkles with a charming Viennese *Schwung*.

Mikulska's fundamentally serious and idiomatic approach to the *Hungarian Rhapsodies* precludes any hint of vulgarity, yet allows for stretches of light-hearted frolic, even coquetry, when called for. These are original readings, devoid of hysteria, that will likely satisfy even the most discriminating Hungarian listeners. Something of the rhythmic acuity and hauteur that inform her evocations of the Roma of the Carpathian basin enliven her realisation of Liszt's flamenco-inflected Iberian fantasy, the *Rhapsodie espagnole*. Taken as a whole, these four rhapsodies combine idiomatic piquancy, rhythmic aplomb and precisely gauged colour with a dignity of presentation that is irresistible.

Technically speaking, microphone placement for the recording sessions last year in the Leipzig Gewandhaus may have been a trifle close. But this is a minor consideration compared to the vivid character and charm of Mikulska's piano-playing. I look forward to hearing more of her. **Patrick Rucker**

Messiaen

Catalogue d'oiseaux

Pierre-Laurent Aimard pf

Pentatone © ③ PTC5186 670 (153') • DDD/DSD



Messiaen's birds have, it seems, been tamed: at least to the extent that there are

something like a dozen versions of the *Catalogue d'oiseaux* obtainable on CD or as downloads. Once upon a time such a plethora would have been hard to conceive, given the extreme demands of the 13 pieces on the pianist's physical and mental agility, plus the challenge for the listener of their remorselessly forbidding textures and obsessive cut-and-paste structures. Not that his other great piano cycle, the *Vingt Regards sur l'Enfant-Jésus*, is exactly a picnic; but at least its technical tours de force are more immediately connectable to pianistic traditions (Liszt, Scriabin, Ravel) and its esoteric imagery easier for the listener to relate to the music.

All this can be viewed positively, of course, as a result of Messiaen's whittling

away at clichés, leaving only his authentic individual voice. That's provided you can take his extraordinarily detailed evocations of his beloved birds (all 77 of them) and their various habitats in France at various times of the day as serving his dazzling and inexhaustible pianistic invention, rather than – as he himself would have wanted it – the other way round. But how else to get past the anthropomorphic descriptions that would make even a Scriabin blush? How, for instance, is the player supposed to make a bird sound 'voluble' or 'nonchalant', never mind 'like the cry of an assassinated child'? In fact the *Catalogue* enshrines a central paradox: its concept is at the extreme end of programmaticism while its effect is just as extremely abstract.

Unsurprisingly, Pierre-Laurent Aimard's interpretations are anything but tame. His dynamic range is formidable, his voicing of chords scrupulously faithful, his clarity unimpeachable. It's hard to imagine the textures having greater impact or precision, or the continuity and discontinuity being projected with greater concentration. Opinions might vary with regard to his pianistic colours, on whether his *fortissimos* are unduly metallic, for instance. But the extremes are written into the score, and certainly not a single sound emerges with indifference.

Put a microscope on the playing and there are some passing oddities: long notes are regularly cut short in 'L'Alouette lulu' and 'Le Lioriot', for example, and the pedalling in 'La Buse variable' as the buzzard makes its circles isn't quite by the book. On the other hand, the 'interminable trill' of the grasshopper warbler in 'La Rousserolle Effarvatte' is given even slightly more than its regulation 37 seconds, whereas the otherwise hyper-faithful Yvonne Loriod is content with 22. Nor is the usually scrupulous Peter Hill beyond reproach in terms of metronomic accuracy: the opening of his 'Rousserolle Effarvatte' is a good 25 per cent under tempo.

Yes, this is no more than nitpicking. And, truth to tell, all these three are supreme Messiaen exponents. Is it a dereliction of duty if I say I can't find a way of ranking them? Loriod's touch is if anything even more uncompromising than Aimard's; Hill isn't quite so clamorous, but his cushioned sound at quieter levels makes for a more plausible evocation of such things as the 'rose and mauve' sunrise in 'La Rousserolle Effarvatte'.

There are one or two external factors to consider. If you are allergic to grunting and sniffing, be warned that Aimard evidently isn't. This is music that sensitises the ear to tiny nuances of colour, and odd groans that

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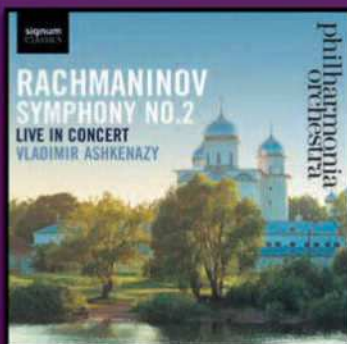
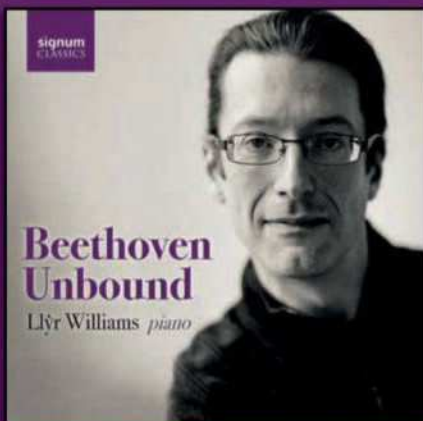
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Clarity and elegance: Nikolai Lugansky revisits Rachmaninov's Preludes

might be intensely involving in the concert hall can be equally distracting on disc. Mind you, the traffic noise that impinges on Loriod's recordings can also be annoying if you let it. Otherwise all three recordings are superb: kudos to the piano technicians.

Nigel Simeone's essay for Pentatone is exceptionally informative on factual background. The late Anthony Pople's for Unicorn-Kanchana scores just as highly for sensitive musical assessment. For Loriod the 18-disc set on Warner Classics contained Messiaen's own treasurable if highly idiosyncratic commentary but this is not available with the current download version.

Perhaps the most curious thing about Aimard's venture is the absence of 'La Fauvette des jardins', the wonderful half-hour pendant to Messiaen's *Catalogue*, not to mention the 1961 'La Fauvette passerinette' rediscovered by Peter Hill and recorded by him on Delphian. But maybe there are plans to add these at a later date. Meanwhile I salute an outstanding achievement. **David Fanning**

Selected comparisons:

Loriod (9/71⁸) (WARN) 2564 62162-2

Hill (5/88⁸, 9/89⁸, 8/90⁸) (UNIC) UKCD300

Rachmaninov

Complete Preludes

Nikolai Lugansky *pf*

Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 2339 (82' • DDD)



The name of Nikolai Lugansky has become inextricably associated with the

music of Rachmaninov and it's not difficult to understand why. He has the requisite technique in spades, he has the dynamic range and, most importantly, he is emotionally completely attuned to this music. Such absorption means that though he is revisiting the Opp 3 and 23 from 2000, you won't find radical rethinking going on here. Rather it's about honing, about refining and redefining. The yearning of Op 23 No 6, for instance, is more nuanced than previously, while the voicings of the inner section of Op 23 No 5 are even more subtly conveyed, contrasting with a drive of the outer sections that never turns edgy. The *Presto* of Op 23 No 9 is a little slower than previously – less viscerally exciting – but in its place we have a clarity of detail and elegant turns of phrase that

underline its Chopinesque qualities.

Lugansky's earlier account of the last of Op 23 now seems relatively foursquare compared to his more sinuous new interpretation.

In the opening Prelude of Op 32, he lets rip in the faster writing to unfettered effect, even if Steven Osborne's way with the filigree is irresistibly delicate. Highlights are many: the bells of No 3 are suitably fulsome, while the G major (No 5) is suitably airborne (though here Lympany in her first recording is in a class of her own). Lugansky's is a set that balances strength and delicacy – Ashkenazy may find more biting brilliance in Op 32 No 8 but Lugansky is altogether warmer-toned, contrasting with the intensity of resignation of his B minor (No 10). The last of the set has true grandeur – it's steady compared to Osborne but Lugansky has the goods to back it up. An impressive addition to his discography. **Harriet Smith**

Preludes – selected comparisons:

Ashkenazy (11/85⁸) (DECC) 475 8238DOR

Osborne (6/09) (HYPE) CDA67700

Lympany, r1941-42 (10/17) (ELOQ) ELQ482 6266

Opp 3 & 23 – selected comparisons:

Lugansky (A/01) (ERAT) 8573 85769-2

Michael Barenboim

Berio Sequenza VIII **Paganini** Caprices, Op 1 – selection **Sciarrino** Six Capricci **Tartini** Violin Sonata, 'The Devil's Trill', B g5

Michael Barenboim *vn*

Accentus ③ ACC30431 (73' • DDD)



Recorded in Berlin's Jesus-Christus-Kirche, and with a programme

juxtaposing older with newer solo violin repertoire, this latest recital disc from Michael Barenboim has much in common with the excellent Bach, Bartók and Boulez solo violin programme he released last year (3/17). However, in other ways it's taking a very different and more emotionally potent exploratory tack, because whereas last year's human-interest linking thread came in the shape of Yehudi Menuhin, this time Barenboim has paired a musicological 'history of Italian solo violin literature' theme with the universally resonant idea of 'Ecstasy and Abyss'. The result is a set of performances with not a small amount of emotional kick to them.

In fact, overall, this is a recital over which everything combines to fantastic affect. The Sciarrino *Capricci* of 1976 would be a striking way to open any disc, for instance, but all the more so here within the Jesus-Christus-Kirche's giant, characterful acoustic; take the *Vivace*'s opening hail of little sound-arrows shooting off into its cavernous space to stunning effect, or the *Andante*, whose rippling, shimmering figures sound like little fractals of sunlight catching the floating dust particles. It's incredibly atmospheric stuff, even for those readers whose tastes will lean more towards the disc's Tartini and Paganini offerings. Plus, if you zip to the end of the programme for the non-consecutively ordered selection of Paganini's Op 1 Caprices, you'll instantly hear in No 1's scatter-hail of spiccato demisemiquaver figures a possible inspiration for that Sciarrino *Vivace*.

These outer sets of works have, of course, elements of both 'ecstasy and abyss' about them. However, part of the programme's brilliance is the way in which, after the Sciarrino, Barenboim then uses Tartini's *Devil's Trill* Sonata – appearing here to brilliant effect without its usual accompaniment – to start us on a gradual descent into an emotional 'abyss'; initially imperceptibly, but after the concluding *Allegro assai*'s long, angry bow strokes it's no surprise to be pushed out of the frying pan and into the fire of Berio's

Sequenza VIII at the programme's core. Add Barenboim being on fire himself, technically and interpretationally, and it all adds up to a fantastically engaging listen.

Charlotte Gardner

'Four Pieces, Four Pianos' 6

Chopin Études, Op 10 **Liszt** Réminiscences de Don Juan, S418 **Schubert** Wanderer-Fantasie, D760 **Stravinsky** Three Movements from *Petrushka*

Alexander Melnikov *pf*

Harmonia Mundi ③ HMM90 2299 (80' • DDD)



Alexander Melnikov's new release of Schubert, Chopin, Liszt and

Stravinsky is eloquent testimony to the insights possible through the use of technologies the composers knew and exploited so brilliantly. Nowadays, pianists expecting to be taken seriously as interpreters of music from the 18th through early 20th-centuries are at a distinct disadvantage without at least a nodding acquaintance with historical instruments. Among those whose familiarity with early pianos informs their performances on modern ones, few share Melnikov's keen discernment of the instruments' evolving capacities, and fewer still his executive mastery. Here he plays Schubert's 1823 *Wanderer-Fantasie* on a piano from c1828-35 by the Viennese maker Alois Graff, not to be confused with the more famous Conrad Graf. Chopin's Op 10 Études, composed between 1829 and 1832, are played on an 1837 Paris Érard. For Liszt's *Don Juan*, published in 1843 and revised in 1877, Melnikov plays an 1875 Bösendorfer, and for Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, a 2014 Steinway.

This is a fully realised, robust *Wanderer-Fantasie* that sings, dances, proclaims and cajoles in a veritable eruption of joy. Most striking are the tempos which, from all evidence in both Schubert's score and Liszt's concerto transcription, seem apt and inevitable. The quick movements, fleet as gazelles, lithe and pliant without being driven, surround and support a chill *Adagio alla breve*, all the more desolate for its context.

Melnikov's Chopin Études are distinctively characterised, with every interpretative choice scrupulously rooted in the text and refreshingly devoid of self-conscious exhibitionism. The industrious intricacy of the A minor (No 2) hovers ambivalently between the comic and the creepy, while the C sharp minor (No 4) all

but explodes in frustrated rage. Between them, the lovely E major (No 3) unfolds with the naturalness of sweet conversation. The F major (No 7) and F minor (No 8) Études take unfettered wing in a way that recalls the young Backhaus. In the sweep and grandeur of the C minor (No 12), victory of the revolution is a foregone conclusion.

True to its title, *Réminiscences de Don Juan* emerges as though recalled from a dream. Melnikov treats Liszt's elaborately florid cadenzas as the connective tissue out of which various scenes come into sharp focus. Bösendorfers retained a vestigial differentiation of registers as late as the 1870s. This quality is front and centre in the 'Là ci darem la mano' variations, where Giovanni's seduction of Zerlina is given almost palpably human dimension. Vivid character portrayal is also at the heart of this sparkling *Petrushka*. I don't know of an orchestral performance of the ballet that evokes the title character with greater sympathy and pathos than Melnikov achieves in 'Chez Petrouchka'. Nor can I think of recorded performances of either Liszt's or Stravinsky's benchmark creations more compelling than these.

Melnikov's prevalent richness of detail, unforced but precise rhetoric and exquisite sense of colour are skilfully captured by the engineers. His interpretations warrant the attention of professionals, even as they promise enduring pleasure for lovers of the best piano-playing. **Patrick Rucker**

'Legacy'

Beethoven Piano Sonata No 23, 'Appassionata', Op 57 **Brahms** Intermezzo, Op 119 No 1. Waltz, Op 39 No 15 **Chopin** Preludes, Op 28 – selection **Debussy** Images – Reflets dans l'eau **Ginastera** Malambo, Op 7 **Piazzolla** Fuga y misterio **Prokofiev** Ten Pieces from 'Romeo and Juliet', Op 75 **Villa-Lobos** A prole do bebê, Book 1

Sergio Tiempo *pf*

Avanti ③ 5414 706 1049-2 (74' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Studio Arsonic, Mons, Belgium, October 13, 2016



The latest release of Sergio Tiempo, the Caracas-born pianist of impeccable

credentials, is titled 'Legacy'. His personal programme, inspired by members of his family, was recorded live in Belgium in October 2016.

Tiempo is at his most irrepressibly original in the Piazzolla and Ginastera works, where his alternately impetuous and relaxed pianism is given full rein. Both



Perceptive and compelling: Joseph Nolan demonstrates his instinctive feel for the French Romantic organ repertoire

showcase his remarkably adroit repetitions of both single notes and chords. Subtle touch and brightly coloured textures characterise the piquantly atmospheric selections from the first book of Villa-Lobos's *A prole do bebê*.

Of the European repertoire, Debussy's 'Reflets dans l'eau' is most appealing. Tiempo's enormous resources of touch create textures that seem truly liquid. His take on four pieces from *Romeo and Juliet* is nothing if not imaginative. Yet a tendency to stretch the underlying rhythm in the interests of expressive lyricism can lapse into a sentimentality that seems antithetical both to Prokofiev and to the pieces' origin in ballet.

Tiempo's penchant for putting a personal stamp on everything he plays occasionally crosses the border into self-indulgence. Despite their technical brilliance, the six Chopin Preludes are undermined by focus on detail at the expense of cohesive individual entities. Something similar, though on a larger scale, is at work in the *Appassionata*. Preoccupation with immediate textures, abetted by the lack of an inerrant rhythmic path, enervates and fragments the opening *Allegro assai*. Curiously incongruous variations in the slow movement followed by a freewheeling finale, replete with clipped note values and inconsistent articulation, do not add up to convincing Beethoven. **Patrick Rucker**

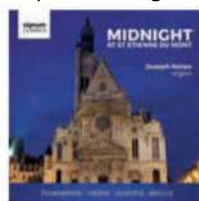
'Midnight at St Etienne du Mont'

Briggs *Le tombeau de Duruflé* **Duruflé** *Suite, Op 5* **Tournemire** *Improvisation sur le 'Te Deum' (transcr Duruflé)* **Vierne** *Fantômes, Op 54* No 4. Symphonies: No 5, Op 47 - Final; No 6, Op 59 - Scherzo

Joseph Nolan *org*

Signum © SIGCD470 (79' • DDD)

Played on the organ of St Etienne du Mont



For organists of a certain vintage the Parisian church of St Etienne du Mont is indelibly associated with Maurice Duruflé, its *organiste titulaire* from 1929 until his death in 1986. Appropriately Joseph Nolan places Duruflé's most famous organ work, the *Suite* of 1931, at the centre of this stunningly recorded programme.

Nolan, whose Widor recordings have shown him to have an intelligent and instinctive feel for the French Romantic repertoire, enhances that reputation here with playing that is perceptive, compelling and intensely musical. The *Suite's* *Prélude* unfolds with tantalising slowness (although something goes a little awry around 3'46"), occasional flashes of virtuosity flaring up like candles before guttering away into the darkness. Nolan magically evokes the

elusive *danse macabre* quality of the central *Sicilienne*, and for him the final *Toccata* is no empty display of virtuosity but a frenzied attempt to shake off the darkness of night and burst out into the blazing light of day.

Other works are related to Duruflé (if not to St Etienne) by being by his teachers. Tournemire, as profligate with his creative powers as Duruflé was sparing with his, is represented by a typically expansive plainsong-based improvisation, transcribed by his erstwhile student. While Nolan delivers the *Tournemire* with unabashed flair, he adds an undercurrent of aggression to the *Vierne* pieces. His take on the *Scherzo* from the Sixth Symphony is more like the angry hurling of rocks than the 'tableau of cicadas chirping' suggested by the colourful booklet notes. Nevertheless, 'Fantômes' inhabits a suitably eerie dimension and the finale from the Fifth Symphony effectively evokes the harsh clamour of a French carillon.

English organist David Briggs specialises in out-Frenching the French at plainsong-based improvisations, and no fewer than 11 plainchant themes crop up in *Le tombeau de Duruflé*. This is a tremendous tour de force for instrument and player, and both come up trumps here.

This disc makes a fitting tribute to an organist and composer who holds a special place in many hearts on either side of the English Channel. **Marc Rochester**

York Höller

Richard Whitehouse reflects on the music of this influential German composer – which incorporates electronic timbres to vivid effect

For a German composer born near the end of the Second World War, the task of absorbing radical changes brought about by previous generations while working towards a musical idiom relevant to its own time must have seemed daunting. Yet this is what York Höller has managed to accomplish and from a comparatively early stage in his evolution – aided by a notably inclusive attitude to music of the past as well as a judiciously attuned ear that has allowed him to combine diverse stylistic elements with great resource and sensitivity.

In achieving this, Höller benefited from his years of study with Bernd Alois Zimmermann (the centenary of whose birth fell this March). Zimmermann's concepts of the sphericity of time and plurality of musical thought, while they most likely caused him an existential crisis, have proved immensely fruitful for younger composers. These can be detected in several of Höller's earliest acknowledged works, not least the *Five Pieces* (1964) for piano, which integrate diverse expressive gestures within their Webernian brevity, the equally gnomic *Three Pieces* (1966) for string quartet and, most revealingly, *Diaphonie* (1965) for two pianos, in which he recalls the combative interplay of Zimmermann's *Monologe* (written just a year before) but allied to greater rhythmic vitality (hence its being an 'Hommage à Béla Bartók').

His Klanggestalt is arguably one of the most vital innovations in contemporary music in the past half-century

The climax of this phase came with *Topic* (1967), casting wide its stylistic net while making virtuoso use of orchestral forces, and the First Piano Sonata (1968), whose three movements underline Höller's formidable abilities on this instrument. Not long afterwards, *Horizont* (1971) was his first score for electronics – a medium Höller was soon to explore extensively, whether as an adjunct to instrumental ensembles or voices, or as a 'fifth component' to augment the standard orchestra in what soon became the focus of Höller's compositional activity.

Having created *Horizont* while working at the electronic studio of West German Radio in Cologne, Höller pursued the integration of acoustic and electronic means throughout the early 1970s. A major breakthrough came with his First String Quartet, *Antiphon* (1976) for string quartet and electronically transformed string quartet on tape. Here that integration achieves a new-found seamlessness and finesse, yet even more significant is the composer's establishment of a *Klanggestalt* (sound shape) such as informs every aspect of this work's musical substance.

The function of *Klanggestalt* is similar to that of the note row in serial music: a sequence of pitches (42 notes in this instance) generates all the melodic and harmonic material



of the piece in question, and can also be translated into durational terms to create a parallel rhythmic element. Such thinking emerged from Höller's studies of serial, aleatoric (chance) and stochastic (random) procedures, though it is equally indebted to Indian raga and Arabian maqam techniques, as well as Medieval isorhythm. In practical terms, then, *Klanggestalt* affords the methodical and cohesive properties of serialism while making possible greater formal flexibility and expressive variety. Along with Per Nørgård's evolution of the 'infinity series', it is arguably the most vital innovation in contemporary music in the past half-century.

During the ensuing decade, Höller applied this thinking to progressively more elaborate media: hence the vivid interplay of ensemble with electronics in *Arcus* (1978), or their poetic amalgam in *Mythos* (1979-80), the multilayered combining of orchestral and electronic timbre in *Résonance* (1981) and the sombre and translucent marriage of vocal and electronic sounds with orchestra in *Schwarze Halbinseln* (1982). In *Traumspiel* (1983), Höller makes use (for the first time in more than 15 years) of a text, with extracts from Strindberg's *A Dream Play* given to soprano and speaker (the latter on tape) in music alternately ethereal and visceral in impact. The sheer plangency of the vocal line and, in the two interludes, the rhetorical power of the orchestral writing amply suggested that Höller was more than capable of essaying an opera.

Derived from the novel by Mikhail Bulgakov, Höller's opera *Der Meister und Margarita* (1984-89) was received enthusiastically at its Paris premiere in 1989 – testament to the ambition of a work that tackles, head on, the sardonic wit and humane amorality of this fable of dissolution. Sizeable forces are used with fastidious attention to detail, not least an electronic component notably more pervasive than that in Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* (premiered 24 years earlier). Whereas the latter collapses under its own emotional negativity, Höller's opera exudes a belief in the resilience



of the human spirit as compulsive as it is life-affirming. Sadly, this is likely to remain

Höller's only opera; one about

Caligula, commissioned by Vienna State Opera, was abandoned owing to his deteriorating eyesight (successfully allayed but not before an enforced break from composition in the mid-1990s).

After this artistic high point, Höller might have been forgiven for retreating to ground already trod. In fact, creative momentum continued unabated with the scintillating *concertante* piece for trumpet *Fanal* (1989), the luminous orchestral work *Aura* (1991-92) and, most impressively, *Pensées* (1990-93). Inward and speculative, this Second Piano Concerto (very different from its capricious predecessor a decade earlier) makes innovative use of a MIDI grand piano which elides seamlessly into the electronic component – not least in the closing stages when sound becomes spatially diffused in music of quiet transcendence. Increasingly, the possibilities of electronics were being incorporated directly into Höller's instrumental writing – whether in the pithy vignettes of *Tagträume* (1994) for piano trio, the engaging play with formal archetypes of *Partita* (1996) for two pianos or in the Second String Quartet (1997), whose nominally classical four movements conceal their derivation from the Gregorian hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* as well as a renewed involvement with expressive gestures typical of Berg and Bartók.

This drawing on the past in the process of moving towards the future is most pronounced in the vehemence yet also eloquence of *Zwiegestalt* (2007) for piano quintet, though before that came three of Höller's most significant works. Composed to mark the German government's departure from Bonn, *Aufbruch* (1998-99) is his most immediate orchestral piece; its symphonic sense of purpose is furthered in the choral work *Der ewige Tag* (1998-2000) with settings of

HÖLLER FACTS

1944 Born in Leverkusen, North Rhine-Westphalia, on January 11

1963-67 Studies piano with Alfons Kontarsky and composition with Bernd Alois Zimmermann

1971-72 Works at electronic studio of WDR, Cologne

1977-91 Lecturer in analysis and theory at Cologne University of Music, returning in 1995 as professor of composition

1987 Awarded prize of Unesco international composers' forum

1989 Premiere of opera *Der Meister und Margarita* at Palais Garnier, Paris, on May 20

1991 Becomes member of Academy of Arts, Berlin

1993-95 Professor of composition at Hanns Eisler School of Music, Berlin


1999 Premiere of *Aufbruch* at Marktplatz, Bonn, on July 1

2010 Receives Grawemeyer Award for Music Composition for *Sphären*

2013 Premiere of Cello Concerto in Hamburg, November 15

2018 Premiere of Viola Concerto in Cologne, May 6

Ibn Scharaf, Georg Heym and Pablo Neruda which outline a morning–noon–night trajectory given focus by the notion of the sun's rising in the East then setting in the West. A five-year gestation preceded the most expansive of Höller's orchestral works. *Sphären* (2001-06) might seem unusual in consisting of six clearly defined sections, but the seamlessness with which these 'sound images' fold into each other (aided by electronics of extraordinary subtlety) en route to the climactic 'Sphärentrauer' only compels admiration. It understandably received the 2010 Grawemeyer Award for composition, thereby confirming Höller's stature within European new music.

Subsequent years have produced several more instrumental works, including his Cello Concerto for Adrian Brendel, his Third Piano Sonata (both 2010-11) and *Crossing* (2012-13), with its renewed interplay of ensemble with electronics; and his Viola Concerto (2016-17) is given its premiere next month by Tabea Zimmermann. Meanwhile, the title of Höller's most recent piece for orchestra, *Voyage* (2013-14), might also be taken as emblematic of a composer whose outlook has always, in the words of his favourite 20th-century author Robert Musil, 'that particular expression where, in one happy moment, the goal of a movement is discovered before it is reached so the final stretch of the journey can be completed. And this expression is always a bold one, unwarranted by the present state of things – a combination of the exact and inexact, of precision and passion.' 

RECORDINGS OF HÖLLER

Featuring some of his most significant works



Der Meister und Margarita

Soloists; Cologne Opera Chorus; Gürzenich Orchestra, Cologne Philharmonic / Lothar Zagrosek
Col Legno (1/01)

Warmly received at its Paris premiere (and then in 1991 in Cologne, whence this recording is taken), what is likely to remain Höller's only opera renders the disquieting essence of Bulgakov's novel (set against the backdrop of Stalin's purges) in exhilarating terms. Zagrosek's reading lacks nothing in theatrical immediacy. This is one of the seminal operas from the past 50 years.



Sphären. Der ewige Tag

WDR Radio Chorus and WDR Symphony Orchestra, Cologne / Semyon Bychkov
NEOS

This is a welcome coupling of two of Höller's most significant pieces from the first decade of this century. *Der ewige Tag* draws on poems by three writers from different times and cultures, while *Sphären* is the most ambitious of its composer's orchestral works – its six movements connected through the subtle use of live electronics and a sense of fulfilment in the face of loss.



'Piano Works'

Kristi Becker, Pi-hsien Chen, York Höller, Fabio Martino, Florian Müller, Tamara Stefanovich pfs
EDA

Höller's piano output stretches across the greater part of his output, and this inclusive survey (also including the music for two pianos and piano duet) offers ample evidence of its composer's innate understanding of the instrument. A formidable line-up of pianists is featured, while a bonus track of Höller's playing underlines his own credentials as a performer.

Vocal



Fabrice Fitch welcomes a debut disc from The Gesualdo Six:

'As one has come to expect given such a pedigree, the vocal quality is very fine, not to say superb' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 102**



Alexandra Coghlan listens to Shakespeare-inspired Polish music:

'The folk energy and primal rhythmic thrust of Bembinow's Sonnet make a welcome contrast to the contemplative responses' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 104**

JS Bach

Mass in B minor, BWV232

Katherine Watson *sop* Tim Mead *countertenor*
Reinoud Van Mechelen *ten* André Morsch *bass*
Les Arts Florissants / William Christie

Harmonia Mundi ® ② HAF890 5293/4

(105' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at the Philharmonie de Paris,
September 2016



The mystical ideal of waiting to perform late, great art until well into

pensionable age may apply to pianists and conductors of yesteryear but hardly to modern-day luminaries of period performance. The exception is William Christie who, while not an especially noted Bachian, feels only now is the time right to set down his vision of the Mass in B minor. His rationale, expressed lucidly in the booklet, contains no new historically informed approach or temptation to gimmickry. Simply, he regards the work as a panorama of Bach's art and his federal European absorption of sacred and, especially, secular style. Christie's observations on Bach performance in the decades before the zeitgeist of 'authenticity' are rather less convincing.

The sophisticated landscape of Les Arts Florissants is drawn expressly from Christie's 'affirmation of humanism', as he puts it, and therefore the elegant, abstract lines heard from the outset of the *Kyrie* – supported by a gently sprung tactus – are of far greater interest to him than an intensity born of the German-speaking rhetorical gesture of the cantata world, a biting graphic 'Crucifixus' aside. The phraseology of the second 'Kyrie' is a case in point, as are the sumptuous textures of the 'Et incarnatus', where the courtly French motet lurks ceremoniously in the wings. These are the movements in which you sense Christie truly at the helm.

For all the technical prowess with which he dispatches each of the great choruses, from the 'Cum Sancto' onwards, Christie seems less creatively attentive – pressing the start button and just leaving them to unfold. For this reason, the 'Et resurrexit', and the litany of subsequent D major choruses appear curiously generic, uniformly fast and under-inflected. The 'Et in terra pax' is not as shiningly expectant as, say, in the recording of his protégé Jonathan Cohen (Hyperion, 11/14), and like the 'Qui tollis' appears to stew in its juices rather than draw the listener towards a directional gravity of enhanced supplication.

The solos and duets are generally more engaging, with some notable singing and obligato playing, and none more than Timothy Mead's alluring 'Qui sedes' or a cultivated 'Quoniam' with the vibrant André Morsch, accompanied by Anneke Scott's brilliantly and highly distinctive horn-playing, and a sensitively shaped 'Incarnatus' with Reinoud Van Mechelen. Mead and Katherine Watson are gloriously compatible in 'Et in unum', though I wish the care taken here had been applied to Watson's earlier duet ('Dominus Deus'), where she is allowed to sit repeatedly under the note.

Lapses in intonation are indeed surprisingly frequent and production values a touch disappointing: it wouldn't take much, for example, to correct the wrong bass note at 2'26" in the 'Et in terra pax' or a missed trumpet note in the 'Cum Sancto' at 1'00". There is a sense that, for all Christie's crowning achievements in the worlds of Italian and French music especially, Bach is somehow not quite his bag – despite moments of intermittent illumination.

Jonathan Freeman-Attwood

JS Bach

Six Motets, BWV225-230. O Jesu Christ, meus Lebens Licht, BWV118

Norwegian Soloists' Choir;

Ensemble Allegria / Grete Pedersen

BIS ® BIS2251 (68' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



Grete Pedersen and the Norwegian Soloists' Choir have been well received

in these pages over the past decade for recordings ranging from Hildegard to Xenakis, so it is only natural that they should get around to the Bach motets eventually. One imagines they have performed them many times, however, and indeed these seem like well-settled accounts of music whose attractions never pale. Typically Nordic, the choir's sound is clear, light and precise, with a sound that finds a happy medium between choral blend and the expressive frisson that arises from occasionally being aware of individual voices, and if they do not always hit us with the strong dynamic contrasts and sudden sculptural gestures of the Monteverdi Choir under John Eliot Gardiner, there is beauty aplenty.

Thoughtfulness too: the opening of *Komm, Jesu, komm* is tender and steady, the choir's flexibility of tone allowing a hardening in the second 'aria' section; *Fürchte dich nicht* shows a soft touch, with the chorale melody delicately laid into its texture rather than imposed on it; *Der Geist hilft* winds down nicely at its close; and *O Jesu Christ, meins Lebens Licht*, its orchestral accompaniment making it more like a cantata movement than a normal motet, benefits from a forceful bass-line crescendo towards the end.

If there are times in the more fragmented sections of these pieces when the ensemble is not perfectly tight, things certainly sharpen up in those places where doubling from the strings and winds of Ensemble Allegria release the singers to give *Lobet den Herrn* and (especially) *Singet dem Herrn* all the joyful exuberance they demand. All these elements inevitably come together in the great *Jesu, meine Freude*, in whose outer sections the instruments add weight to the architecture while in between Pedersen's firm concept of the work's progress is



Clear, light and precise: the Norwegian Soloists' Choir mix choral blend and expressive frisson in Bach's motets

exemplified by a bold but grounded 'Trotz' section that travels swiftly but smoothly from defiance to calm confidence – the latter being a term which might indeed be used as a general characterisation of these charming and accomplished performances.

Lindsay Kemp

Selected comparison:

Monteverdi Ch, Gardiner (8/12) (SDG) SDG716

Brahms

'The Complete Songs, Vol 7'

Sechs Lieder, Op 3 – No 2, Liebe und Frühling I; No 3, Liebe und Frühling II. Nachwirkung, Op 6 No 3. Acht Lieder und Romanzen, Op 14 – No 1, Vor dem Fenster; No 5, Trennung. Vier Lieder, Op 43 – No 3, Ich schell mein Horn ins Jammertal; No 4, Das Lied vom Herrn von Falkenstein. O liebliche Wangen, Op 47 No 4. In meiner Nächte Sehnen, Op 57 No 5. Acht Lieder, Op 58 – No 2, Während des Regens; No 8, Serenade. Eine gute, gute Nacht, Op 59 No 6. Neun Lieder, Op 63 – No 1, Frühlingstrost; No 2, Erinnerung; No 3, An ein Bild; No 4, An die Tauben. Serenade, Op 70 No 3. Nachtigall, Op 97 No 1. Verrat, Op 105 No 5. Deutsche Volkslieder, WoO33 – No 14, Maria ging aus wandern; No 17, Ach Gott, wie weh tut Scheiden; No 18, So wünsch ich ihr ein' gute Nacht; No 24, Mir ist ein schön's braun's Maidelein; No 27, Ich

stand auf hohem Berge; No 28, Es reit ein Herr und auch sein Knecht; No 32, So will ich frisch und fröhlich sein; No 39, Schöner Augen schöne Strahlen

Benjamin Appl bar **Graham Johnson** *pf*
Hyperion © CDJ33127 (78' • DDD • T/t)



For the latest in Hyperion's Brahms series, Benjamin Appl is reunited with

Graham Johnson, restoring a combination that proved so winning in their Schubert recital (Wigmore Hall Live, 6/16). Here, of course, it's a composer somewhat more weighed down and world-weary, at least as heard in this selection: it's a programme short on hits, perhaps, but with no lack of gems.

As before, what's remarkable is Appl's sheer fluency as a Lieder singer, his ease with the idiom and his naturalness of manner – words and line sit together just as they should. He proves an expert and eloquent guide in the many quasi-chivalric numbers presented early on: in the faux naivety of 'Ich schell mein Horn ins Jammertal' or the slight knightly pomposity of 'Das Lied vom Herrn von Falkenstein'.

But the main enjoyment, for me at least, comes toward the middle of the programme, as the composer shows his more intimate, ardent voice: in the two lovely Serenades and the gently affecting 'Eine gute, gute Nacht'. Appl's way with the final little phrase of 'Nachtigall' is meltingly gorgeous, and 'Mir ist ein schön's braun's Maidelein' stands out among the eight folk song arrangements that conclude the disc.

But while there's no quibbling with the young baritone's interpretations, or the basic high quality of his voice, it seems here to have lost some of its honeyed sweetness; the timbre sounds a little woodier than previously on record, and melismas can feel a little laboured. Johnson's piano-playing is impeccable throughout, however: beautifully clear, alive and responsive, capturing the mellow Brahmsian lilt we hear in so many of these numbers perfectly. He's especially fine in the remarkable pitter-patter of 'Während des Regens' and the tentative stop-start accompaniment to the Schack Serenade.

Johnson's notes offer the usual wealth of wisdom and wit, while Hyperion's sound is immaculate – especially when heard as a Studio Master download. **Hugo Shirley**

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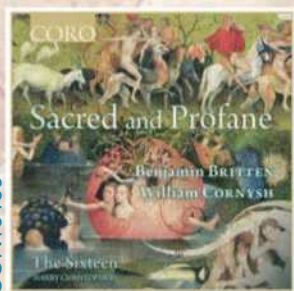
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The Sixteen | Harry Christophers

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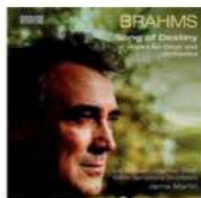
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Brahms

'Song of Destiny'

Begräbnisgesang, Op 13. Gesang der Parzen, Op 89. Liebeslieder-Walzer: Op 52 – No 1, Rede Mädchen, allzu liebes; No 2, Am Gesteine rauscht die Flut; No 4, Wie des Abends schöne Röte; No 6, Ein kleiner, hübscher Vogel nahm; No 8, Wenn so lindt dein Auge mir; No 9, Am Donaustrande; No 11, Nein, es ist nicht auszukommen; Op 65 No 9, Nagen am Herzen^a. Nänie, Op 82. Schicksalslied, Op 54

^aElin Skorup sop Eric Ericson Chamber Choir; Gävle Symphony Orchestra / Jaime Martín
Online © ODE1301-2 (58' • DDD • T/t)



Jaime Martín turns to the shorter choral works for the second instalment of his

Brahms survey, launched last year with a recording of the Serenades that was much admired in these pages (5/17). At its best, the new disc is comparably impressive, with performances of great lucidity and refinement from the Gävle Symphony Orchestra and Eric Ericson Chamber Choir. There's not a trace of stolidity anywhere: clarity is paramount, which in turn dictates the disc's considerable strengths as well as its occasional weaknesses. Martín expertly teases out the orchestral textures, allowing us to appreciate the subtlety of Brahms's string- and woodwind-writing in *Nänie* and *Schicksalslied*, and his striking deployment of the brass in *Begräbnisgesang*. The choral singing, meanwhile, is exceptional in its control and balance, the counterpoint wonderfully clear and vivid, even in the most complex polyphony.

Martín is often at his best when Brahms is at his most severe. *Gesang der Parzen* really hits home with its measured, oppressive tread and finely controlled dynamic shading. *Begräbnisgesang*, taken faster than usual, is similarly relentless, rivalling John Eliot Gardiner's version (SDG, 10/08) in its fierce austerity. Elsewhere, however, clarity sometimes comes at the price of intensity. *Schicksalslied* opens wonderfully well, with a real sense of loftiness as well as beauty in its evocation of the 'selige Genien' indifferent to human affairs. But the subsequent *allegro*, for all its precision, isn't quite as turbulent – and therefore not as disquieting – as it could be. *Nänie*, very much shaded towards elegy, is the only work on the disc that arguably needs larger choral forces, particularly at the climaxes: I prefer the greater sonic and emotional weight of Abbado (DG, 4/92) and Sinopoli (DG, 5/93) here. Martín

rounds the proceedings off, meanwhile, with Brahms's 1870 orchestral version of nine of his *Liebeslieder-Walzer*, done with great elegance and bags of charm, and forming much-needed emotional relief after the dark meditations on fate, transience and mortality that precede them. **Tim Ashley**

Bruckner • Eybler • Führer • Gänsbacher

Bruckner Missa solennis. Magnificat. Tantum ergo Eybler Magna et mirabilia Führer Christus factus est Gänsbacher Te Deum, Op 45
Johanna Winkel sop Sophie Harmsen mez
Sebastian Kohlhepp ten Ludwig Mittelhammer bar
RIAS Chamber Choir; Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin / Łukasz Borowicz
Accentus © ACC30429 (47' • DDD)



The key may be B flat minor but the debt of Bruckner's opening gambit to

the D minor of Mozart's Requiem is unmistakable. In fact the greater part of this *Missa solennis* is cast in B flat major, and thus it is renamed in the new edition by Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs, but the music is in substance the same as a previous recording led by Karl Anton Rickenbacher.

The work of the industrious Cohrs includes a significant contribution to the completed finale of Bruckner's Ninth, as recorded by Rattle in Berlin, and his own version of Mozart's Requiem. His reconstruction takes care of the details down to the relatively unfamiliar Credo I intonation (Rickenbacher uses the now-standard Credo III).

Not least thanks to the pliant timbres of the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin (including a late-Mozartian trio of trombones), the whole enterprise breathes the cleansing air of Upper Austrian landscape and churches. The 30-year-old Bruckner may not (yet) have been granted the sustained inspiration revealed by Schubert at the same age in writing the still-overlooked Mass in E flat, but family resemblances extend beyond the intricate fugues ending both *Gloria* and *Credo* to the spacious hush and noble, swinging melody of the *Sanctus*.

The rhetoric of late-ecclesiastical Mozart pervades not only the Mass itself but also the motets which were deployed at its premiere in 1854. An 1828 offertory by Eybler does not suggest any significant advance in language from a man who had been the first to try and fail to complete Mozart's Requiem manuscript. More

developed in style, indeed marked by a few fingerprints we may have assumed peculiar to Bruckner, are the 1830 *Christus factus est* of Führer and especially a brief and punchy *Te Deum* setting from 1844 by Gänsbacher (known at large, if at all, for his contribution to Diabelli's waltz project). More speculative are the *Tantum ergo* and *Magnificat*, apparently written by Bruckner in 1852 and completed by Cohrs from surviving parts, which give pleasure mainly through the youthful-sounding team of soloists and tightly disciplined singing of the RIAS Kammerchor. Whether the appeal of this short-measure recording reaches beyond Bruckner aficionados remains to be seen, but the performances could hardly be more persuasive.

Peter Quantrill

Missa solennis – selected comparison:

Bamberg SO, Rickenbacher (12/91⁸) (PROF) PH16059

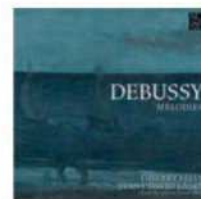
Debussy

Mandoline. Dans le jardin. Trois Mélodies de Verlaine. Trois Chansons de France. Fêtes galantes – série II. Le promenoir des deux amants. Trois Ballades de François Villon. Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé. Noël des enfants qui n'ont plus de maisons

Thierry Félix bass-bar Stany David Lasry pf

Arcana © A446 (49' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded 1995. From A44



Thierry Félix's Debussy recital was recorded in 1995 but seems largely to have

been overlooked on its first release a year later. It's a striking disc, however, carefully programmed and, at its best, engagingly done. Félix, who gave up his performing career for the church some years ago and was ordained a deacon in 2013, gives us the late songs (from 1904 onwards) complete, prefaced by 'Mandoline', 'Dans le jardin' and the *Trois Mélodies de Verlaine* from 1891. His lightish, agile bass-baritone is attractive and his way with words consistently deft. The rapid shifts between irony and sincerity in the Villon ballads are beautifully done, though he's at his best in the Verlaine sets, with their imagery of sexual and emotional regret: 'Le son du cor s'afflige vers les bois' from *Trois Mélodies* sounds very desolate; 'Colloque sentimentale' which closes the second *Fêtes galantes*, is marvellous in its melancholy bitterness.

Félix's pianist Stany David Lasry, meanwhile, plays an 1874 Érard – the type of instrument that Debussy himself would have used as a Conservatoire student and

for which many of his earlier piano works would have been written. This in itself may recommend the disc to many, and there's a wonderful clarity in the sound, which allows Lasry to emphasise countless points of detail, whether in the surging seascape of 'La mer est plus belle que les cathédrales' from the *Mélodies de Verlaine* or the flickers of colour and ambiguous harmonies that underscore the *Trois Poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé*. The downside is that the recording, on occasion, places Lasry too far forwards and Félix too far back, which at times threatens to unbalance things, the opening 'Mandoline' above all. **Tim Ashley**

Donizetti

Messa da Requiem

Natalia Rubiś sop Agnieszka Rehlis mez Jaroslav

Březina ten Jiří Brückler, Jan Martiník basses

Collegium Vocale 1704; Collegium 1704 /

Václav Luks

Fryderyk Chopin Institute © DVD NIFCDVD006
(77' • NTSC • 16:9 • DTS5.0 & PCM stereo • 0 • T/t/s)
Recorded live at the Basilica of the Holy Cross,
Warsaw, August 19, 2016



When Vincenzo Bellini died in 1835 at just 34, Donizetti, four years his junior, was determined to honour his memory.

Such was the rough-and-tumble nature of his career, though, that he had to abandon his Requiem after just a month: what we have, though substantial, is incomplete, with no *Agnus Dei*, *Benedictus* or *Sanctus*.

It wasn't heard, so far as we know, until 1870 and is only sparsely represented on disc. A recording featuring Pavarotti and Renato Bruson that appeared on Decca is long deleted (4/81), leaving Miguel Angel Gomez-Martinez's Orfeo reading the main recommendation (8/89). Even in its incomplete form, it's an imposing score: serious, considered and audibly sitting on the spectrum between the Requiems of Mozart and Verdi. There's plenty of melody, as one would expect, as well as some fluent contrapuntal writing; while there's no shortage of drama, the composer never resorts to melodrama.

This new release stands distinct from previous recordings, of course, for being on DVD, filmed at a concert that took place as part of Warsaw's 'Chopin and his Europe' Festival. It also features period instruments: Collegium 1704's raspy brass, mellow winds and reedy strings give the piece a welcome freshness. The chorus make a good concentrated sound, too, with the tenors standing out for their plangent tone.

The soloists are very respectable, though one misses a certain Italianate brightness and warmth in the Slavonic line-up. Václav Luks conducts with evident affection and with a welcome alertness to both the drama and the many telling details in Donizetti's orchestration – the lovely, sighing duet between solo violin and cello in the 'Ingemisco', for example.

The camera direction is perhaps a little busy, and the lens on some shots stretches out the picture unnaturally. It's also a shame that the release seems not to be available on Blu-ray; the DVD retails at a relatively high price, though it does usefully include complete text and translation. Nevertheless, it's an enjoyable record of a satisfying performance of a rewarding work. **Hugo Shirley**

Fauré

'The Complete Songs, Vol 3'

Chant d'automne, Op 5 No 1^a. Three Songs, Op 8 – No 1, Au bord de l'eau^b; No 3, Ici-bas^c. Automne, Op 18 No 3^a. Les roses d'Ispahan, Op 39 No 4^d. Clair de lune, Op 46 No 2^b. Four Songs, Op 51 – No 1, Spleen^e; No 4, La rose (Ode anacreontique)^e. Le parfum impérissable, Op 76 No 1^f. Chanson de Mélisande, Op 80^f. Soir, Op 83 No 2^f. Le don silencieux, Op 92^e. Ave Maria, Op 93^g. Chanson, Op 94^h. Mirages, Op 113ⁱ. Sérénade du Bourgeois gentilhomme^e. Tristesse d'Olympio^j. Vocalise-étude^e. Vocalises^f – 13; 24 'Lorna Anderson, 'Isobel Buchanan, 'Janis Kelly, 'Louise Kemény soprs 'Sarah Connolly, 'Ann Murray mezs 'Iestyn Davies counter ten 'John Chest, 'William Dazeley, 'Thomas Oliemans bars Malcolm Martineau pf
Signum © SIGCD483 (59' • DDD • T/t)



Volume 3 of Malcolm Martineau's Fauré series closes with a performance by

William Dazeley of *Mirages*, Fauré's penultimate song-cycle, written in 1919 to texts by the Symbolist poet Renée de Brimont. The cycle has been well served on disc, most notably, of late, by Marianne Crebassa and Fazıl Say on their 'Secrets' album released last year. Dazeley and Martineau give us another fine interpretation, however, darker in mood than Crebassa and Say, if equally cogent and refined. The restrained insistence of Dazeley's singing proves persuasive in music that balances ornate imagery with stripped-back simplicity of expression. Martineau, meanwhile, lets every note tell with his customary subtlety: there's exquisite detail in his treatment of the ripples that disturb the calm waters of

'Reflets dans l'eau' and the shifting rhythmic figurations that accompany the elusive 'Danseuse' of the final song. It's a strong addition to the work's discography.

As with the previous volumes, meanwhile, the remaining songs are distributed between an impressive roster of singers, nine in all. Some are new to the series: Isobel Buchanan, who returned to performance in 2015 after an absence of some 20 years, is fiercely dramatic in the moody 1870 Baudelaire setting 'Chanson d'automne', which also finds Martineau at his most intense and incisive; Louise Kemény, her voice like a flash of silver, sounds beautiful in the 'Ave Maria' from 1895. Among the regular singers, John Chest continues to impress and beguile, this time with the early Hugo setting 'Tristesse d'Olympio', while Ann Murray is at her most elegant in the familiar 'Clair de lune'. Lorna Anderson gives us 'Le parfum impérissable' along with Mélisande's song from the *Pelléas* incidental music, both hauntingly done: she sings the latter in English, quietly reminding us that the score was originally commissioned for the London premiere of Maeterlinck's play in 1898. There are a handful of uncharacteristic slips, however, in the accompanying booklet: printed texts occasionally differ from what is being sung; Ann Murray is credited with performing 'Spleen', when it's actually sung, with considerable power, by Thomas Oliemans. But even so, this is another fine issue in what is proving to be a most admirable series. I look forward to the rest of it.

Tim Ashley

Mirages – selected comparison:

Crebassa, Say (12/17) (ERAT) 9029 57689-7

Finn

Falsettos

2016 Broadway Cast

Ghostlight ™ ② 84509 (133' • DDD)



The two parts of William Finn and James Lapine's brilliant urban opera

Falsettos first came together in 1992 when the horrendous human cost of the Aids epidemic was still incalculable. But *March of the Falsettos* (1981) and *Falsettoland* (1990) were each born in the thick of this terrible scourge and each independently served as a shared experience for those who were living or had lived through it. I remember sitting in a Broadway theatre back in 1992 and the emotional involvement of that audience – most of



Powerfully intense: Neil Ferris conducts Sonoro in Frank Martin's Mass for Double Choir, coupled with sacred music by James MacMillan – see review on page 100

whom will have suffered loss directly or indirectly – was palpable.

Falsettos is now iconic, and undoubtedly William Finn's masterpiece, something he is unlikely to surpass – but what is really startling listening now to this revival from 2016 is how fresh and prescient the piece still sounds, how the jokes still land and the heartache is still raw. The tone – certainly that of Act 1, *March of the Falsettos* – is edgy and satirical. Let's face it, any show which kicks off with the nervy counterpoint of a number entitled 'Four Jews in a room bitching' isn't about to pull its punches.

There's a lot in this creative pot: the four Jews: Marvin, married to Trina with a son Jason on the brink of his bar mitzvah; Whizzer, Marvin's gay lover; and Mendel, Marvin's psychiatrist who is now having an affair with Trina, Marvin's wife. OK? Oh, and let's not forget the lesbians from next door. And as if these permutations and their ramifications weren't complicated enough, the Aids epidemic – 'Something bad is happening' – arrives in Act 2.

This is, in the broadest sense, an intimate epic in which the frictions and agitations of Act 1 – delivered as they are at the speed of light in a sequence of sung-through scenes-cum-songs as scabrously funny as they are insidiously catchy – find repose and reflection in the heartbreak of Act 2. It has,

if you like, an air of Finn as a Brecht/Weill figure for the late 20th century with his 'Teen Tiny Band' as much a reference to his and Lapine's characters as his four-piece combo – keyboards, reeds, percussion – retaining (in Michael Starobin's orchestrations) a keen sense of period.

I love that the highly strung wife Trina has a number called 'I'm breaking down' (well and truly nailed by Stephanie J Block) and that the line 'the only thing that's breaking up is my family' is so obvious that you almost don't think of it. I love that the bond of father and son at the close of Act 1 is mirrored by the bond between that same son and father's lover in Act 2. These were bold ideas back in 1981 and 1990 – they still are. As is the ravishing song 'Unlikely lovers' where the male and female couples in our tale find such consoling kinship.

You can hear why this musical is so beloved. Marvin's love song for Whizzer 'What more can I say?' – affectingly sung by Christian Borle – is one of the most beautiful contemporary theatre songs I know, while the climactic duet for Borle and Andrew Rannells, 'What would I do?', is heartbreaking but also super-uplifting. It does for me every time I hear it. Truly an eleven o'clock number with a timeless reach.

Jason's bar mitzvah eventually takes place in his father's lover Whizzer's

hospital room – and everyone in Finn and Lapine's Teeny Tiny Band is there. The implications and symbolism of that could hardly be more overwhelming both in and beyond the context of this show. To quote its final line: 'Lovers come and lovers go / Lovers live and die fortissimo / This is where we take a stand / Welcome to Falsettoland.' **Edward Seckerson**

Gounod

'Cantatas and Sacred Music'

Marie Stuart et Rizzio^a. Fernand^b. La Vendetta^c. Messe vocale pour la fête de l'Annonciation^d. Christus factus est^e. Hymne sacrée^f. Messe de Saint-Louis-des-Français^g

^aGabrielle Philipponet, ^cChantal Santon-Jeffery,

^{be}Judith Van Wanroij ^{sops} ^{fg}Caroline Meng ^{mez}

^{fg}Artavazd Sargsyan, ^aSébastien Droy,

^{bc}Yu Shao ^{tens} ^fAlexandre Duhamel ^{bar}

^bNicolas Courjal ^{bass} ^fFrançois Saint-Yves ^{org}

^{dfg}Flemish Radio Choir, ^{abcdfg}

Brussels Philharmonic / Hervé Niquet

Ediciones Singulares © 2010 ES1030

(129' • DDD • T/t)



'My sole aim', Gounod wrote of his Conservatoire days in his *Mémoires d'un artiste*, 'was the Grand Prix de Rome, which I was

determined to win, at all costs.' He did, in fact, carry off the coveted prize on his third attempt in 1839, and the latest volume in Palazzetto Bru Zane's Prix de Rome series, issued to mark his bicentenary, examines both the route he took to achieve it and the immediate impact on his work of the two years scholarship at the Villa Medici that it afforded.

Success did indeed come, it would seem, at the cost of reining in his enthusiasm and originality. The first disc presents us with his second-round dramatic cantatas, written to prescribed texts. Gounod won with *Fernand*, an Orientalist three-hander set during the siege of Granada, in which a Spanish nobleman risks both life and honour to reunite Zelmire, the Muslim girl he adores, with Alamir, her lover in the enemy ranks. Elegant and attractively orchestrated, it is by no means negligible, but seems cautious, harmonically and melodically, when placed beside its more adventurous predecessors. *Marie Stuart et Rizzio* (1837) is very much a young hothead's work – a real roller coaster of a piece, emotionally confrontative and characterised by an almost Berliozian recklessness of harmony and expression. *La Vendetta* (1838), set on Corsica and depicting a mother swearing her son to avenge his murdered father, is more introverted: the tension and oppressive mood are unwaveringly sustained, though the Meyerbeerian closing duet is a bit stiff.

Gounod initially found Rome disappointing: 'Provincial, ordinary, colourless and dirty almost everywhere', he wrote. But his encounter with the city's church music, Palestrina in particular, fired his imagination. The second disc surveys his sacred works composed in Rome itself and in Vienna, where he briefly lived after his studies were complete. His Mass for Rome's French church, Saint-Louis-des-Français, strongly prefigures the *St Cecilia* Mass of 1855, in which Gounod reused some of its material. The real revelation here, though, is the unaccompanied *Messe vocale* of 1843, which shows how much he learned from Palestrina without becoming imitative. Each section is preceded by a chorale setting of a versicle associated with the Virgin Mary, which then becomes a cantus firmus in the movement proper. The polyphony is exquisite, and the overall effect is one of timelessness rather than archaism. It is a most beautiful work.

As with the previous volumes, Hervé Niquet conducts the Brussels Philharmonic and Flemish Radio Choir in performances that are for the most part exemplary. There are minor cavils over some of the soloists: tenor Artavazd Sargsyan is pushed in his

upper register in some of the sacred works; in *La Vendetta*, Chantal Santon-Jeffrey and Yu Shao sound too close in age to be mother and son. But there are fine things elsewhere: Gabrielle Philiponet and Sébastien Droy are gripping as Mary Stuart and Rizzio; Judith Van Wanroij mesmerises and touches as Zelmire in *Fernand*, and also gets to sing the ravishing motet *Christus factus est*, written in Vienna late in 1842. The choral singing has wonderful richness, clarity and fervour, above all in the *Messe vocale*, which is breathtaking. A tremendous set, it adds immeasurably to our understanding of Gounod's work. Very highly recommended indeed. **Tim Ashley**

MacMillan • F Martin

'Passion & Polyphony'

MacMillan Bring us, O Lord God. Cecilia virgo.

Data est mihi omnis potestas. Children are a

heritage of the Lord. Hymn to the Blessed

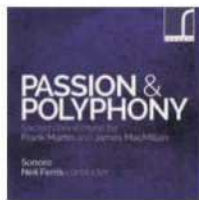
Sacrament. Miserere. O Radiant Dawn

F Martin Mass for Double Choir

Sonoro / Neil Ferris with **Emily Pailthorpe** ob

Benjamin Roskams va

Resonus © RES10208 (67' • DDD • T/t)



Twenty years ago the *Gramophone* Recording of the Year was a Hyperion disc by

Westminster Cathedral Choir under James O'Donnell. The centrepiece of that recording was Frank Martin's unaccompanied Mass for Double Choir. That remains by far and away the finest recorded performance of the work, this latest from Sonoro offering, I regret to say, no serious competition.

Neil Ferris has certainly taken the work to heart and his reading is nothing if not powerfully intense, but he drives his singers hard and they respond with a performance over-burdened with drama and passion. The choir is small – the booklet lists 20 but pictures of the recording sessions show just 17 voices – and they compensate for this by expending much effort on creating a big sound. This is certainly robust singing and covers a huge dynamic and expressive range (vividly displayed in an astonishingly operatic delivery of the *Sanctus*), but it overwhelms the deeply personal and introspective qualities which are at the core of Martin's sublime Mass.

Coupling Martin's work with a number of sacred pieces by James MacMillan makes sense, although the contention in the booklet notes that both composers 'have an affinity with Renaissance music' is questionable. The principal MacMillan

work here is his extended setting of the *Miserere* with its obvious nods towards Allegri's setting of the same text. Once again the choral sound is robust and the delivery highly charged, with the chanted sections exuding a lovely tranquillity.

The numerical thinness of the choir works to the advantage of the shorter pieces, notably the enchanting *Hymn to the Blessed Sacrament* with its sinuously intertwining parts for oboe and viola. Ferris moulds the performances to convey that unique sense of mystery, tradition, folk-like openness of expression and exotic harmoniousness which characterises so much of MacMillan's sacred music.

Marc Rochester

Martin – selected comparison:

Westminster Cath Ch, O'Donnell

(3/98) (HYPE) CDA67017

Pitts

Pitts Missa Unitatis^a interspersed with **Clemens**

non Papa Ego flos campi^b **Ešēnvalds** Spring, the

sweet spring^c **Mouton** Nesciens mater^b **Muhly**

Spiral Mass^d **Poulenc** Ave verum corpus^c **Verdi**

Laudi alla vergine Maria^c **Traditional** Hemlig

stod jag^c

^{ab}**Cappella Pratensis**; ^{ad}**Netherlands Chamber**

Choir / ^bStratton Bull, ^{ad}Stephen Layton;

^c**Nationaal Vrouwen Jeugkoor / Wilma ten Wolde**

with ^d**James McVinnie** org

Challenge Classics © CC72711 (64' • DDD • T/t)



As director of Tonus Peregrinus, Antony Pitts's spiritually imbued sacred

settings have evolved hand in hand with his vocal ensemble over the years, as heard on recordings such as 'Alpha and Omega' (Hyperion) and the modern oratorio *Jerusalem-Yerushalayim* (lequalmusic). However, running in parallel with his work with Tonus Peregrinus have been several projects with other groups, including the *Missa Unitatis* ('Mass of Unity').

This work's origins go back to 2008, when Pitts was commissioned to write a Mass setting for Stratton Bull's vocal group Cappella Pratensis. The composer soon struck on the idea of creating a work that could be performed either in whole or in part for single or double choir.

The two-choir version heard here unites Cappella Pratensis with the Netherlands Chamber Choir under Stephen Layton. The result is a fascinating, multi-layered work that blends chant, polychoral elements and medieval and Renaissance polyphony

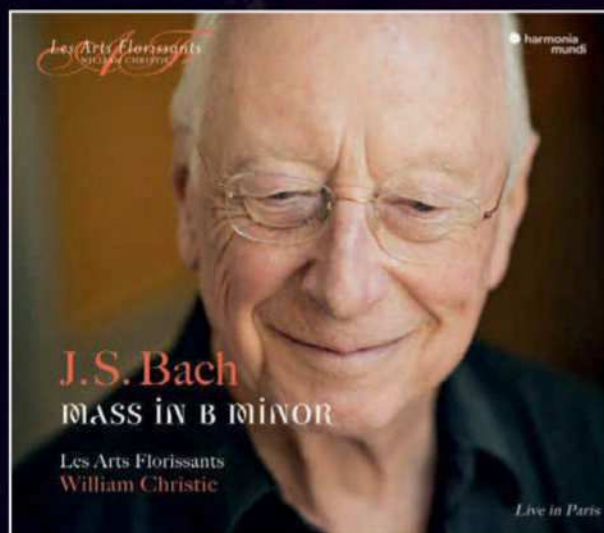
WILLIAM CHRISTIE

LES ARTS FLORISSANTS

J. S. BACH

MASS IN B MINOR

One of the supreme monuments of western sacred music, the *Mass in B minor* has been constantly re-examined by successive generations of performers. The questions it raises for musicologists and conductors are many and varied; each of them strives to give his or her own reading with the necessary humility. It was in this frame of mind that William Christie tackled the work in the course of a memorable tour in 2016. These discs enshrine the result.



with techniques drawn from more recent neo-tonal and minimalist styles.

The opening *Kyrie* starts in relatively straightforward fashion, with each choir alternating short modal statements in a manner resembling a kind of medieval tuning meditation. Far more complex layers are overlaid in the *Gloria*, which ends with the simultaneous combination of up to 16 individual lines using complex rhythmic and metrical juxtapositions. A rhythmically charged *Credo* leads to more homophonic statements in the *Sanctus* and *Benedictus*, while the concluding *Agnus Dei* radiates a quiet luminescence.

My only criticism is that we don't hear this clearly on the recording. Pitts's Mass settings are dotted throughout and interspersed with other music, ranging from Jean Mouton and Clemens non Papa to Nico Muhly's excellent *Spiral Mass*. This piecemeal presentation of Pitts's Mass rather takes away from the sense of unity conveyed by the work's title. That said, the combined forces of the Cappella Pratensis and Nederlands Kamerkor impart plenty of zip and energy to these performances, to which should also be added impressive contributions by the Netherlands Female Youth Choir in music by Poulenc, Verdi and Ēriks Ešēvalds.

Pwyll ap Siôn

H Praetorius

H Praetorius *Missa Tulerunt Dominum meum*. O vos omnes. Surrexit pastor bonus. Tulerunt Dominum meum **G Gabrieli** *Maria stabat ad monumentum* **Handl (Gallus)** *Filiae Jerusalem*, nolite **Hassler** *Deus, Deus meus* **Lassus** *Tristis est anima mea*

Siglo de Oro / Patrick Allies

Delphian © DCD34208 (59' • DDD • T/t)



The discography of Hieronymus Praetorius (apparently no relation of the more famous and younger Michael) is small but distinguished, The Cardinal's Musick and Weser-Renaissance Bremen having devoted anthologies to his motets. Issued in the run-up to Easter, this offering traces the events of Passion Week through a sequence of motets by his contemporaries from Catholic German courts, culminating in a polychoral Mass based on his own motet for the Resurrection itself.

These are accomplished performances, confident, sonorous and full of character. Lassus's *Tristis est anima mea* is hardly new to the catalogue but Siglo de Oro do its pathos full justice, with every detail

audible and its rhetorical arc firmly yet unobtrusively described. The other motets are treated with the same care, though for sheer impact Lassus is hard to top. (His influence is felt throughout the disc, not least in Praetorius's compositions, which update his style somewhat, though not markedly.) In the motet and Mass the choir really let rip, while managing to project the text clearly in all but the most contrapuntally intricate passages. The full-throated singing compensates for occasional longueurs in the Mass. In more lightly scored passages the intensity eases off a touch and individual voices sound less secure; but Patrick Allies's firm grasp of pacing and architecture (demonstrated earlier on) serves both choir and music well. It has been said that the level of musical craftsmanship was perhaps higher in the later Renaissance than at any time before or since, a thesis which this enjoyable disc fully supports. **Fabrice Fitch**

'English Motets'

Byrd *Miserere mei, Deus. Ne irascaris, Domine. Vigilate* **Cornysh** *Ave Maria, mater Dei*

Dunstable *Veni Sancte Spiritus* **Gibbons** *O Lord, in thy wrath rebuke me not* **Morley** *Haec dies*

Parsons *Deliver me from mine enemies*

Sheppard *Libera nos, salva nos - I; II* **Tallis** *If ye love me. Loquebantur variis linguis. Suscipe quaeso Domine* **Taverner** *Quemadmodum* **Tomkins** *When David heard* **White** *Christe, qui lux es et dies I*

The Gesualdo Six / Owain Park

Hyperion © CDA68256 (73' • DDD • T/t)



The Gesualdo Six are the latest all-male, one-to-a-part *a cappella* vocal ensemble to emerge from the English choral scene, and this is their recording debut. They sport not one but two countertenors, who occasionally double up on the top line in five-voice pieces; and unlike some of ensembles of its kind, the director, Owain Park, does not himself sing (at least not here). As one has come to expect given such a pedigree, the vocal quality is very fine, not to say superb, and when the music calls for an extrovert approach (as do Byrd's *Vigilate* or, very differently, Dunstable's four-voice *Veni Sancte Spiritus*) the singers respond with an athleticism and a feel for pacing that isn't perhaps so common. The close miking does justice to the contrapuntal details, maintaining clarity in all but the densest writing.

Promise in spades, then, but reservations also. One notes in the more sombre pieces

(which make up the bulk of the music) a tendency for tempos to decelerate so that what began slowly finally verges on the ponderous. This may be symptomatic of a reverential attitude that extends not just to the most famous pieces (Byrd's *Ne irascaris, Domine* and Tallis's *Suscipe quaeso*) but to programming. An anthology of English motets needs little justification, but this has an air of 'greatest hits' about it – especially when the two outliers, Dunstable and Tomkins, are each represented by one very famous piece. The contrast of styles can at times jar, for example when Morley's frothy, canzonetta-like 'motet' follows Dunstable; more seriously, it's a pity for such a talented ensemble to introduce itself so conservatively. (Equally jarring is the edit on the final chord of Byrd's *Vigilate*.) In short, I look forward to hearing them in a more focused recital. **Fabrice Fitch**

'Les Funérailles Royales de Louis XIV'



Chein Dirige Domine. Ne recorderis Colin

De profundis Helfer Pie Jesu Lalande

De profundis. Dies irae. Fantaisie ou caprice que le Roy demandoit souvent Philidor *Marche pour les Pompes funèbres des cérémonies extraordinaires*

Céline Scheen *sop* **Lucile Richardot** *mez*

Samuel Boden *countertenor* **Marc Mauillon,**

Christian Immler *bars* **Pygmalion / Raphaël Pichon**

Video director **Stéphane Verité**

Harmonia Mundi © (DVD + Blu-ray) HMD990 9056/7

(102' • NTSC • 16:9 • PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Chapelle Royale, Versailles, November 2015



Prolonged exequies for Louis XIV culminated at the abbey of Saint-Denis on October 23, 1715, in a funeral service that involved both of the court's principal musical institutions – the Musique de la Chapelle and Musique de la Chambre – performing from a gallery erected especially for the occasion. Music may have been heard at various other stages during eight days of ceremonial rites but no reliable details are known. The recent tercentenary of the Sun King's exequies was a perfect opportunity for a commemorative concert filmed at the Chapelle Royale in Versailles. In numerous ways – not least the different location and speculative minutiae of the programme – this is not a reconstruction but instead a quasi-liturgical presentation that places two magnificent *grands motets* by Lalande among plenty of plainchant sung from

GRAMOPHONE

Editor's Choice



Every issue, Gramophone's Editor's Choices highlight the most exciting and important new releases. Explore here a selection of the most thrilling music-making of the past six months



SCHUBERT
'Der Einsame'
Ilker Arcayürek *ten*
Simon Lepper *pf*
Champs Hill
Our reviewer
reached for
some of the

greatest tenors by point of comparison, and Ilker Arcayürek emerged with head held high as an impressive part of an ongoing tradition.

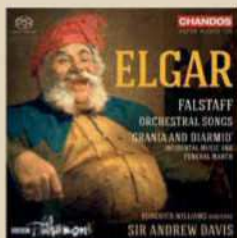
► **REVIEWED IN AWARDS 2017**



**'MUSIC FROM
THE
PETERHOUSE
PARTBOOKS,
VOL 5'**
Blue Heron /
Scott Metcalfe
Blue Heron

American choir Blue Heron offer us extremely fine singing on this superb recording of little-known repertoire from the latter years of Henry VIII.

► **REVIEWED IN OCTOBER 2017**



ELGAR
Falstaff. Songs
Roderick Williams
bar BBC
Philharmonic
Orchestra /
Sir Andrew Davis
Chandos

A *Falstaff* full of personality and perceptiveness, Roderick Williams eloquent in orchestral songs ... just the highlights from a fine Elgar anthology.

► **REVIEWED IN JANUARY 2018**



**'NATURE AND
THE SOUL'**
Latvian Radio Choir
/ Kaspars Putniņš
LMIC/SKANI
This is a truly
beautiful album
of Latvian

choral works performed by singers clearly completely immersed in its musical and cultural foundations. A celebration of a country's music not to be missed.

► **REVIEWED IN AWARDS 2017**



**'GRANDISSIMA
GRAVITA'**
Rachel Podger *vn*
Brecon Baroque
Channel Classics
An album
of really
splendid

music-making from an artist, Rachel Podger, whose own performances are matched by her ability to inspire excellence in her colleagues.

► **REVIEWED IN DECEMBER 2017**



**KANCHELI.
SCHNITTKKE**
'Light Over
Darkness'
Erato Alakiozidou *pf*
Lutoslawski
Quartet
Odradek

An excellent disc from the innovative Odradek label, musicianship and sound-quality of very high standard making for a grippingly intense chamber experience.

► **REVIEWED IN JANUARY 2018**



**'CARNEVALE
1729'**
Ann Hallenberg *mez*
Il Pomo d'Oro
/ Stefano
Montanari *vn*
Pentatone
Step into Venice

in full festive flow as Ann Hallenberg offers arias from seven operas you'd have heard if you were there in 1729: historical research bears fabulous fruits for the ears!

► **REVIEWED IN AWARDS 2017**



BEETHOVEN
Symphonies Nos
1 & 3
Vienna Symphony
Orchestra /
Philippe Jordan
Wiener Symphoniker
An impressive

statement of intent from conductor Philippe Jordan as he begins a Beethoven cycle with his Vienna Symphony, on its own record label.

► **REVIEWED IN JANUARY 2018**



R STRAUSS
Salome
Sols; Frankfurt
Radio Symphony
Orchestra / Andrés
Orozco-Estrada
Pentatone
'A deeply musical

account of the score', wrote critic Hugo Shirley of this dramatic telling of Strauss's opera, all recorded and presented in excellent sound.

► **REVIEWED IN JANUARY 2018**

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different areas of the chapel (accompanied by a serpent, and occasionally sung as overly operatic solos), and also several brief, simple and small motets by lesser-known contemporaries.

Devised in collaboration with musicologist Thomas Leconte, this conjectural fantasy affords creative licence for Pygmalion and Raphaël Pichon to create a beguilingly dolorous musical experience. There is no older-fashioned polyphonic Mass of the sort that was certainly sung during the funeral in 1715 (Leconte acknowledges that Du Caurroy's *Missa pro defunctis* or an obscure setting by Charles d'Helfer are the likeliest bets). The audience is immersed in darkness during this theatrical representation; for what seems like eternity tiny lamps attached to the choir's music folders provide the only light in the chapel as they move silently between stations for plainchants and small choral pieces. The architectural glory of the building is revealed eventually when brighter stage lights illuminate the main performance area for Lalande's *De profundis* – the only piece certainly performed in 1715, and which bursts with thrilling modernity into the hitherto archaic solemnity.

Pygmalion's elegantly sensual orchestral playing and choral singing are sensational from start to finish. Five soloists sing with impeccable gracefulness and fluency, such as Samuel Boden, Marc Mauillon and Christian Immler's sweetly plangent trio ('Lacrymosa') in Lalande's extraordinary *Dies irae*. There is vitality in Pygmalion's broadly emotive phrasing, thrilling harmonic tensions in choral climaxes, and a sculpted expression of refined catharsis. English subtitles turn out to be merely a transcript of the sung Latin texts, and there is no documentary, so the DVD format offers nothing other than the opportunity to watch fantastic music-making in action – but the concert on its own terms enables us to experience Lalande in a fresh creative context. **David Vickers**

'Shakespired'

'Sonnets by William Shakespeare'

Bembinow ShakeSpired – Th' expense of spirit; Love is too young; Two loves I have **Borzym Jnr** Being your slave, what should I do but tend. No longer mourn for me when I am dead. Those pretty wrongs that liberty commits **Dębski** From fairest creatures we desire increase. When forty winters shall besiege thy brow **Herdzin** If there be nothing new, but that which is. Let those who are in favour with their stars. Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? **P Lawson** To me, fair friend **Łukaszewski** Like as the waves. Weary with toil

Opalka ... lips to kiss ... **Pawlik** Full many a glorious morning have I seen **Przybylski** A woman's face with Nature's own hand painted **Zieliński** That Time of Year **proMODERN**

Warner Classics © 9029 57280-5 (78' • DDD • T/T)



Founded in 2012, the Polish six-voice ensemble proMODERN

are a seriously exciting group. There are obvious parallels with James Weeks's Exaudi or Paul Hillier's Theatre of Voices but proMODERN's sound is all their own – lean, sinewy and infinitely agile. A collective of soloists with an enormous technical toy-box, the group is surely a composer's dream, offering limitless possibilities.

Which makes the uniformity and lack of musical ambition of these new settings of Shakespeare sonnets all the more disappointing. Booklet notes explain little about the genesis of the project but most of the 18 settings (all by Polish composers with the exception of Philip Lawson's Sonnet 104) stay within a very safe compass, both technically and stylistically. There's an anonymity to the writing, smudgy with cluster-chords, structured again and again around similar patterns of rhythmic repetition, and by the end you're left with only a generalised impression of pieces that all bleed and drift into one another.

And then there's the issue of the Shakespeare himself. There's a reason certain sonnets have been set again and again and not others; denser and more verbally playful than the speeches or songs, these knotty, often highly conceptual texts don't lend themselves to easy musical evocation or aural digestion, especially when diction is as occluded as here.

But through the haze some works do stand out. Paweł Łukaszewski's two settings (Sonnets 27 and 60) retain their composer's signature melodic richness and harmonic fingerprint, and the folk energy and primal rhythmic thrust of Miłosz Bembinow's Sonnet 129 make a welcome contrast to the many more contemplative responses, of which Krzesimir Dębski's Sonnet 1 – an enchanting opener with more than a hint of Vaughan Williams's Shakespeare settings – is easily the pick of the bunch.

If you want to revisit Shakespeare's sonnets you'd do better to pick up a copy while listening to one of proMODERN's other, superb recordings. **Alexandra Coghlan**

'Songs of Vain Glory'

Ayer If I were the only girl **Bridge** Come to me in my dreams. 'Tis but a week **Dibdin** Tom Bowling (arr Britten) **Elgar** Submarines **Finzi** At a Lunar Eclipse **Gurney** Most Holy Night **Haydn** Sailor's Song **Holst** Journey's End **Ireland** Spring sorrow **Ives** Tom sails away **Lehmann** When I am dead, my dearest **Novello** We'll gather lilacs **Somervell** To Lucasta, on going to the wars **Stanford** Homeward Bound. A soft day **Traditional** O the sight entrancing. Sweet Polly Oliver (both arr Britten) **Warlock** My own country **Weston/Lee** Goodbye-ee **H Wood** Roses of Picardy

Sophie Bevan sop **Sebastian Wybrew** pf

Wigmore Hall Live © WHLIVE0090 (70' • DDD • T)

Recorded live, December 14, 2014



This collection of English songs (in this instance songs in English, since it

contains two songs by Americans) is a live recording by the soprano Sophie Bevan and the pianist Sebastian Wybrew at the Wigmore Hall on December 14, 2014 (replete with applause). Marking the centenary of the beginning the First World War, the programme of songs topically reflects on the futility and vaingloriousness of war (ominously prefaced by Finzi's 'At a Lunar Eclipse'), and those composers who were embroiled in the conflict in different ways, whether in combat on land or sea, or left at home to fret and pray.

The significance of the songs is further enhanced by their groupings into differing areas of sentiment including the popular songs of the day such as Ivor Novello's 'We'll gather lilacs', Robert Weston's 'Goodbye-ee' and Nat Ayer's 'If I were the only girl'. Bevan and Wybrew perform these with panache, charged as they are with real nostalgia. The section 'Call to Arms' includes Somervell's little-known 'To Lucasta', a beautifully languid interpretation of Gurney's 'Most Holy Night' (with plenty of rubato from Wybrew in the affecting coda) and the evocative 'Roses of Picardy' by Haydn Wood.

There is a nice spread of Britten folk song arrangements, which act as useful points of contrast. The pathos of Dibdin's 'Tom Bowling' in the group 'At Sea' is irresistible, as is Bevan's rendering of Elgar's darkly brooding 'Submarines', assisted by her beautifully controlled intonation and careful phrasing. Gurney's 'The ship' also has compelling fluidity in its ever-changing harmonic background and a captivating yearning in its final postlude, which Wybrew injects with delicious insight.



Ambition and imagination: Jordi Savall and Hespèrion XXI tell the history of Venice through 1000 years of music

In the group 'Bereavement', yearning is a conspicuous sentiment that haunts Ireland's setting of Rupert Brooke's 'Spring sorrow', Liza Lehmann's 'When I am dead, my dearest' (she lost her elder son during the war) and Frank Bridge's moving 'Come to me in my dreams', a song of 1906 revised in 1918. Warlock's comforting 'My own country' figures neatly in 'After the Armistice', particularly the reverie of its last verse, and both performers excel in the austere atmosphere of Holst's 'Journey's End' and the rich assurance of Stanford's masterly 'Homeward Bound'. **Jeremy Dibble**

'Venezia Millenaria'

Music connected with Venice from the Byzantine Empire to the Napoleonic Wars
**Hespèrion XXI; Ensemble Panagiotis Neochoritis;
 La Capella Reial de Catalunya; Le Concert des Nations / Jordi Savall**

Alia Vox (F) (2) (G) AVSA9925 (156' • DDD/DSD • T/t)
 Recorded live at Fontfroide Abbey, Narbonne, France, July 16, 2016; Collegiate Church, Salzburg, July 26, 2016; Tivoli Vredenburg, Utrecht, October 2, 2016



Two discs, over 50 performers and 1000 years of musical history: even by Jordi Savall's standards,

'Venezia Millenaria' is an extraordinary project – proof of what ambition, imagination and, yes, public subsidy can achieve. From the gorgeous printed book (an actual book, not a booklet) with its abundance of historical images and essays by John Julius Norwich and Judith Herrin among others, to the meticulously researched and often newly arranged tracks, drawing together performers from many different traditions and nations, no expense is spared here in realising this enormous idea in all its richness and variety: telling the history of Venice from 700 to 1797 through music.

Imagine walking through the streets of Venice as centuries slip away around you. Through an open window you might overhear a young noblewoman singing a flirtatious song by Hasse; as you pass an Orthodox church the sound of chanting, ancient as the lagoon itself, leaks out; you pass through a curtained doorway into a tavern where folk musicians from Greece and Armenia are playing their traditional dances. This is the disconcerting experience of listening to a recording whose eclecticism mirrors that of the crossroads-city that is its inspiration.

Savall and his Hespèrion XXI and Le Concert des Nations are joined here by La Capella Reial de Catalunya, an Orthodox choir and soloists on instruments including the oud, duduk,

santur and qanun. The result is a chronological musical mystery tour, whose juxtapositions and collisions are often startling. Plunging from the primal ululations of Byzantine or Russian Orthodox chant (whose shared musical roots are amply evident here) into the highly worked sinfonias of Gabrieli or Vivaldi's church music is disorienting but throws up shared points of reference too. The syncopated rhythms that pulse through Willaert's villanesca *Vecchie letrose* are echoed in the traditional Ottoman dance that follows, and the *stile concitato* repetitions of Monteverdi's *Combattimento* (heard here in full – the most substantial work on the recording) recall the thrumming insistence of the Berber music that precedes it.

The characterful instrumental playing of Savall and his colleagues is reflected throughout in the vocal numbers, where colour and drama are prized above beauty, singers captured as though overheard by an anthropologist rather than engineered by a producer. The effect is wonderfully immediate – a snapshot not just of a city but of a spirit of music-making that Savall has pioneered. Many decades since he first began, Savall may have spawned a new generation of imitators, but this musical original is still showing us all how it is done.

Alexandra Coghlan

THE SPECIALIST'S GUIDE TO...

Compilation ballet scores

Jeremy Nicholas chooses 10 essential recordings that best embody that curious early 20th-century phenomenon, the ballet score entirely comprising arrangements of works by earlier composers

The popularity of ballet soared during the course of the 19th century. So did the quality of ballet music, reaching its height with Tchaikovsky's trio of masterpieces. Then in the early 20th century a new fashion emerged for what we might call the compilation ballet – ballets with scores consisting of arrangements of works by earlier composers.

This Specialist's Guide acts almost as a supplement to that in the October 2017 issue (a guide to piano works transcribed for orchestra): five of the 10 ballet scores listed here owe their existence to the piano. Eight are orchestrations of a selection of music from the oeuvre of a single composer, and only the score of *Elite Syncopations* uses music originally and specifically written as dance music (though hardly for the kind of dance movements that Joplin and his fellow ragtime composers could have envisaged). Bach cantatas, Scarlatti sonatas and Czerny *études* in their original guises are about as far from the world of ballet as Monteverdi is from Mahler.

Two of the best-known compilation ballet scores are omitted deliberately: *Les sylphides* and *La fille mal gardée*. The former (in whatever form by whichever arrangers) is assembled from Chopin's ready-made dance music of waltzes, polonaises and mazurkas (and it featured in October's guide). The score

of *La fille mal gardée* draws on the music of numerous composers. The original version, a pastiche choreographed by Dauberval in 1789, was a patchwork of 55 popular French songs which was later added to (and subtracted from) by Ferdinand Hérold (1828), Peter Ludwig Hertel (1864) and John Lanchbery (1960).

All the ballets opposite also have these elements in common: the original material was out of copyright before it could be, as it were, recycled (composers and publishers have to make a living); and, more significantly, they rely on those three cornerstones of the Western classical tradition – melody, rhythm and tonality. **G**



Pineapple Poll in its original 1951 staging at Sadler's Wells, London, as part of the Festival of Britain

PHOTOGRAPHY: BARON/ISLINGTON LOCAL HISTORY CENTRE/SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE

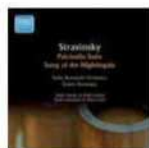


Bach, arr Walton
The Wise Virgins - Suite

LPO / Bryden Thomson

Chandos (4/91)

The one-act ballet was danced to Walton's orchestrations of Bach cantatas and chorale preludes (the best-known section is 'Sheep may safely graze' from BWV208, a secular cantata). Frederick Ashton's choreography is based on the parable from the Gospel of St Matthew of the 10 wise and foolish virgins. Not currently available is Walton's own recording of the six-movement concert suite recorded a few months after the ballet premiere in 1940. Bryden Thomson's is a more than adequate substitute.



Pergolesi et al, arr Stravinsky
Pulcinella - Suite

Suisse Romande Orchestra / Ernest Ansermet

Naxos (4/57)

Diaghilev conceived the notion of a ballet with a *commedia dell'arte* libretto and unearthed various sonatas, orchestral works and opera arias by Pergolesi and others for Stravinsky, who retained the bass lines and melodies but changed the inner harmonies and rhythms to create something his own, but very different from the earlier *Rite of Spring*. Ansermet conducted the premiere in 1920 and recorded the suite in 1956.



Handel, arr Beecham
The Great Elopement (Love in Bath)

Ilse Hollweg sop RPO / Thomas Beecham

Naxos (10/60)

Following *The Gods Go A-Begging* (for Diaghilev) and two others, Sir Thomas Beecham's final ballet culled from Handel's oeuvre, *The Great Elopement* (1945), is his most elaborate. It was written for Ballet Theatre, New York, to a story devised by Beecham. It has never been staged, but Beecham recorded selections of the 22 movements in 1945 and 1951 and the complete score in the late 1950s, by which time it had been renamed *Love in Bath*.



Offenbach, arr Rosenthal
Gaité parisienne

Monte Carlo Philharmonic Orchestra / Manuel Rosenthal

Naxos (11/99)

Once again, we are lucky to have an authentic recording conducted by the composer and/or premiere conductor. Manuel Rosenthal, however, did not lead the first performance of this ballet for the Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo (1938), owing to his poor relationship with the choreographer Léonide Massine. Rosenthal, whose arrangements were made in collaboration with Offenbach's nephew Jacques Brindejont-Offenbach, made this recording (his third and best) aged 92.

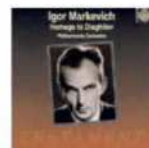


Joplin et al
Elite Syncopations

ROH Orch / Robert Clark

Opus Arte

This popular one-act entertainment was created by Kenneth MacMillan for the Royal Ballet in 1974 on the back of the revival of Joplin's music via Joshua Rifkin's 1970 disc of piano rags and the use of this music in the 1973 film *The Sting*. In fact, seven other ragtime composers in addition to Joplin were called on for the ballet. Dancers Merle Park and Wayne Sleep were among the original cast. This DVD, recorded live at the Royal Opera House in 2010, features Sarah Lamb, Valeri Hristov and Steven McRae.



D Scarlatti, arr Tommasini
The Good-Humoured Ladies - Suite

Philharmonia Orchestra / Igor Markevitch

Testament (12/97)

Vincenzo Tommasini (1878-1950), a pupil of Bruch, was another beneficiary of Diaghilev's largesse and entrepreneurial skill. This ballet is his single claim to fame - the choreography (for the Ballets Russes, 1917) by Léonide Massine, the costumes by Léon Bakst, the story by Carlo Goldoni. The music is arranged from seven Scarlatti keyboard sonatas. This disc has superb versions of the ballet suite and music from six other ballet scores.



Rossini, arr Respighi
La boutique fantasque - Suite

RPO / Antal Dorati

Decca (12/77)

This is a further creation of Léonide Massine, who choreographed it and wrote the scenario with the artist André Derain. The music is Respighi's orchestration of some of the piano pieces from Rossini's *Péchés de vieillesse*. The ballet premiered in 1919, and Massine was still around to coach the Royal Ballet for its 1978 revival. Dorati - who conducts this spirited account of the suite - compiled and arranged some ballet scores himself in the 1940s using music by Delius, Offenbach and Mussorgsky.

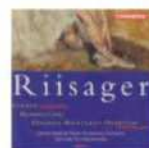


Liszt, arr Lanchbery
Mayerling

ROH Orch / Barry Wordsworth

Opus Arte

Kenneth MacMillan's 1978 full-length ballet tells the true story of the suicide pact between Crown Prince Rudolf, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, and his teenage mistress, Baroness Mary Vetsera. John Lanchbery's masterly orchestrations of Liszt's music took in symphonic poems, several of the *Transcendental Studies*, the First *Mephisto Waltz* and some less familiar pieces for this dark and unsettling story. This DVD of a 2009 performance stars Edward Watson and Mara Galeazzi.

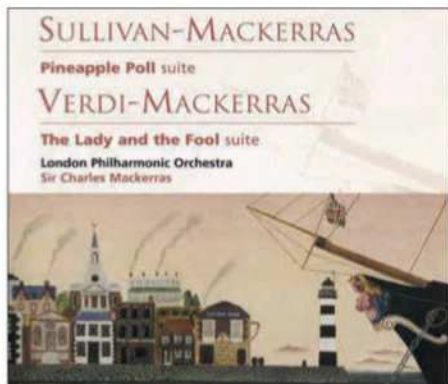


Czerny, arr Riisager
Études

Danish National RSO / Gennady Rozhdestvensky

Chandos (7/97)

Danish composer Knudåge Riisager (1897-1974) is best known for his collaborations with Harald Lander. Their single-act *Études* (premiered by the Royal Danish Ballet, 1948), described as a 'homage to classical ballet training', begins with exercises at the barre and ends with a thrilling ensemble display. Rozhdestvensky gives his Danish players a similar workout in this breezy, brilliant account. What would Czerny have made of this imaginative use of around 30 of his hundreds of piano studies?



Sullivan, arr Mackerras

Pineapple Poll - Suite

LPO / Charles Mackerras Warner Classics

As a young oboist in his native Australia, Mackerras got to know the world of Gilbert and Sullivan. As a répétiteur for a production of *Gaité parisienne*, he became convinced that the music of Sullivan would make a ballet and have the same appeal. He had to wait until 1950 when the music fell out of copyright and then, calling on all the Gilbert and Sullivan operas except *Utopia*

Limited and *The Grand Duke*, arranged this sparkling score in collaboration with the young choreographer John Cranko. It was premiered in March 1951 at Sadler's Wells, London, as part of the Festival of Britain. Mackerras recorded the complete ballet three times. This recording of the suite is coupled with his 1954 Verdi compilation ballet *The Lady and the Fool*.

Opera



Richard Wigmore hears a Porpora rarity from Cencic and co:

'Creaky action and two-dimensional characterisation would not have bothered Roman audiences one iota' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 111**



Mike Ashman welcomes a Dutch Rosenkavalier:

'Peter Rose's Ochs is strong of both rustic accent and aristocratic mien, never a clown but pointedly funny' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 115**

Gasparini

'The Gasparini Album'

Amleto - D'ire armato. **Astianatte** - Se la Grecia s'armerà. **Atalia** - Ombre care. **Bajazette** - Par che mi nasca in seno. **Il Ciro** - Nell'orror della procella. **Engelberta** - Sinfonia. **L'oracolo del Fato** - Qui ti scrivo o nome amato; Se non canti più per me. **Il Roderigo** - Non ha incendio; Non vo lasciarti più. **Santa Eufrosina** - Qui dal porto d'ocean. **Il Tamerlano** - Cor di padre; Svena uccidi. Cantata, 'Andate o miei sospiri'.

Flute Concerto

Roberta Invernizzi *sop* **Auser Musici / Carlo Ipata** *fl*
Glossa © GCD922905 (60' • DDD)

Includes texts and translations



In his booklet note, Carlo Ipata advises that this is only 'one of the many

possible' portraits of Francesco Gasparini. Even to baroque experts Gasparini is best known as the chap who, by leaving his job as choirmaster at the Ospedale della Pietà, provided Vivaldi with his first opportunities in sacred choral music; but he was an important opera composer with numerous successes in Venice and Rome in the first quarter of the 18th century, and one who in recent years has often emerged with credit from mixed baroque recital discs. A few of his larger works have been recorded – including the opera *Il Bajazet* conducted by Ipata (7/15) – but this album may well be the first release to make a wider scan of his vocal art.

Gasparini was a friend of Alessandro Scarlatti, but while his arias can be similarly pithy (particularly in the two from the early *Il Roderigo*), most here show a more Handelian scale and confidence. Indeed, Gasparini is thought to have influenced Handel not just directly with his settings of the *Tamerlano* libretto but also more generally with his skill in accompanied recitative, affectingly demonstrated in the restless 'Ombre care'. And yet, however agitated, there is always grace and composure in his writing, as shown in the

beautifully written cantata *Andate o miei sospiri*. Other highlights include the touching 'Qui ti scrivo o nome amato', in which an obbligato theorbo mimics the tracery of a knife carving a beloved's name, the majestic 'Qui dal porto d'ocean', and the enchanting soprano-recorder songbirding of 'Se non canti più per me'.

There are few sopranos one would rather entrust with these pieces than Roberta Invernizzi, and with her commanding voice and sturdy technique she does not disappoint, articulating the lyrical as effectively as she copes with demanding leaps and passagework. It is a pity, then, that she is heard in a rangy acoustic that effectively pushes her away from us, blunts some of the energy of the orchestra and causes headaches for the editor (hear the double note at 0'28" in 'Ombre care'). An odd choice to make when so much else is so right. **Lindsay Kemp**

Marais

Sémélé

Shannon Mercer *sop* **Sémélé**

Bénédicte Tauran *sop* **Dorine**

Jaël Azzaretti *sop* ... **La Grande Prêtresse de Bacchus**

Hjördis Thébault *sop* **Junon**

Anders J Dahlin *ten* **Adraste**

Thomas Dolié *bar* **Jupiter**

Lisandro Abadie *bass-bar* **Mercure**

Marc Labonnette *bar*

..... **Cadmus/Le Grand Prêtre de Bacchus**

Le Concert Spirituel / Hervé Niquet

Glossa © 2 GCD921631 (137' • DDD)

Recorded 2007; from GCD921614

Includes synopsis, French libretto and translation



What most strikes one about Marais's *Sémélé* is the professional

conception of this masterpiece of *tragédie lyrique*. Marais and his librettist Houdar de La Motte successfully contrived to keep the listener on the edge of his seat from beginning to end, first by maintaining a high level of dramatic tension brought to

life with vivid musical contrasts, here brilliantly realised and paced by Hervé Niquet and the disciplined chorus and orchestra of Le Concert Spirituel; and second by plenty of character development, reflected in strong performances by Mercer as the naive, well-intentioned Semele, Dahlin as Adraste (the victim of the piece), Tauran shocking us with Dorine's deceit and Thébault with Juno's evil cunning. The production team ensured that the results were tightly edited into this two-disc set, first issued in 2008.

Many artistic decisions separate us from Marais's original 1709 realisation. Marais fortunately supervised the publication of a short score but the performance parts are lost. This is illustrated by a quick comparison with two admired recordings of *Sémélé*'s instrumental music: those by Montreal Baroque (ATMA Baroque, 2/07) and Les Ombres (Mirare, 5/15). Niquet and his team rely on the expertise of scholars at the Centre de Musique Baroque de Versailles, who have recreated Marais's orchestration with great sensitivity.

The familiar theme of conflict of royal duty over personal choice and the ensuing, ultimately destructive power struggle between gods and humans was a path already well trod in opera. Marais nevertheless ensured plenty of modern touches. Shapely recitatives lead seamlessly into enchanting airs, duos and dances. The dances include fashionable musettes evoking the sound of a hurdy-gurdy, a folk instrument coming into vogue among aristocratic amateurs, and a monumental chaconne, strategically positioned in Act 2 to crown Semele's seduction by Jupiter. Superbly crafted choruses are a legacy of Marais's boyhood training as chorister alongside Lalande.

The known orchestral effects, too, were modern: the innovative use of solo trumpet in the prologue (disc 1, tracks 5 and 8) and the ethereal effect of two flutes in their upper range, accompanied by four violins (tracks 9 and 23). Musical evocations of subterranean rumbling (disc 2, track 6), an earthquake (track 31) and ultimate



Powerfully affecting: Callum Thorpe and Magdalena Kožená star in Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria*

conflagration in the opera's final scene are summoned up by the lavish continuo forces, which often provide suitably forceful accompaniments to vocal numbers.

And yet, in spite of lavishing all the resources of the Académie Royale de Musique, *Sémélé* somehow failed to please. Marais and his collaborators had clearly neither factored the implications of the recent failure of other productions nor anticipated the terrible winter and famine raging at the time. The failure signalled the end of Marais's 40-year career at the Opéra, first as a continuo player, then as a trusted *batteur de mesure* (conductor) and finally respected house composer. This reissue should serve to prompt another much deserved revival. **Julie Anne Sadie**

Monteverdi

Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria

Rolando Villazón *ten* Ulisse
Magdalena Kožená *mez* Penelope
Katherine Watson *sop* Giunone
Krešimir Špicer *ten* Eumete
Anne-Catherine Gillet *sop* Amore/Minerva
Isabelle Druet *mez* La Fortuna/Melanto
Maarten Engeltjes *countertenor* L'Umana Fragilità/Pisandro
Callum Thorpe *bass* Il Tempo/Antinoo
Lothar Odinius *ten* Giove/Anfimono

Jean Teitgen *bass* Nettuno
Mathias Vidal *ten* Telemaco
Emiliano Gonzalez Toro *ten* Eurimaco
Jörg Schneider *ten* Iro
Elodie Méchain *contr* Ericlea
Le Concert d'Astrée / Emmanuelle Haïm
Stage director **Mariame Clément**
Video director **François-René Martin**
 Erato © 2 DVD 9029 57381-2 (3h 17' • NTSC • 16:9 • DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)
 Recorded live at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris, March 2017



Monteverdi would hardly have returned to the composition of works for the theatre at such an advanced age had it not been for the talents of the acting troupes visiting Venice. As opera moved into the public arena, it became clear that audiences were primarily interested in recognisable human beings – recognisable both in their actions and in their emotional response. In other words, the Venetians demanded stars.

To some extent this recording, which has evolved from staged performances, provides them, above all in Magdalena Kožená's powerfully affective reading of

Penelope. Arioso writing of a highly flexible and at times lyrical kind is prominent in the score, nowhere more so than in 'Di misera regina', which in its contours and effective use of dissonance is clearly in a direct line of descent from the *Lamento d'Arianna*. Although Kožená's dramatic and violently oscillating portrayal of a soul in torment is superbly characterised, expertly moulding words and music into a highly charged vocal line, purists may be uncomfortable with the style of the accompaniment, with its rather busy keyboard figuration. Le Concert d'Astrée employs a sizeable continuo ensemble (which includes strings, archlute, theorbo, harp, harpsichord and organ), while also adding cornetts, sackbuts, recorders, dulcian and percussion to the already rich texture, particularly in the sinfonias, which are enjoyably delivered with brio and crisp articulation. But it must be seriously doubted whether any Venetian theatre, where impresarios concentrated their financial resources on fielding the finest vocalists, would have had recourse to such lush possibilities.

As opera moved from the privacy of the Renaissance court into the public realm of the commercial theatre, the number of characters expanded. While Monteverdi's

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azrielifoundation.org



Peasmarsh Chamber Music Festival 20th Anniversary poster. The poster features a dark blue background with colorful musical notes and stars. The text reads: PEASMARSH CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL 20TH ANNIVERSARY 21-24 JUNE 2018 Inspiring Music in Beautiful Surroundings Programme to be announced in April 2018 CO-DIRECTORS: Anthony Marwood, violin, Richard Lester, cello www.peasmarshfestival.co.uk EAST SUSSEX

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Orfeo was given with just a few singers and considerable doubling of parts, particularly in order to form the chorus, *Ulisse*, composed some 30 years later, requires 19 principal characters. Undoubtedly some roles would have been doubled here as well; but the decision to present no fewer than 14 soloists pays musical dividends and it is among the minor roles (rather than from Rolando Villazón's rather disappointing and over-reaching performance) that some sharply chiselled characterisations emerge. Particularly notable are Jean Teitgen's authoritative Neptune and Jörg Schneider's nicely captured and colourful account of Iro. Rather less enthusiasm for the staging, with its initially amusing but ultimately irritating mixture of Classical, Baroque and modern dress (the suitors in back tie, Telemaco in jeans), set against backdrops of various vintages ranging from the ancient world to a rustic drinking den.

Iain Fenlon

R Paterson

Three Way

The Companion

Danielle Pastin *sop*..... Maya
Samuel Levine *ten*..... Joe
Wes Mason *bar*..... Dax

Safe Word

Eliza Bonet *mez*..... The Domme
Matthew Treviño *bass-bar*..... The Client

Masquerade

Courtney Ruckman *sop*..... Jessie
Samuel Levine *ten*..... Marcus
Danielle Pastin *sop*..... Connie
Wes Mason *bar*..... Larry
Jordan Rutter *counterten*..... Kyle
Melisa Bonetti *mez*..... Tyler
Matthew Treviño *bass-bar*..... Bruce DeBridge
Eliza Bonet *mez*..... Jillian DeBridge

Nashville Opera Orchestra / Dean Williamson

American Modern Recordings © ② AMR1048
 (117' • DDD)

Includes synopsis and English libretto



Three Way is a trio of one-act operas by composer Robert Paterson and librettist

David Cote. In *The Companion*, a woman develops a surprisingly complicated relationship with Joe, her biomorphic android housekeeper/lover. *Safe Word* is set in a sex dungeon where a power struggle develops between a dominatrix and her client. *Masquerade* finds four couples swapping partners at a suburban swingers' party. Operas dealing explicitly with sex and sexuality are certainly nothing

new. From *Don Giovanni* to *La traviata* and *Salome* to *Lady Macbeth*, much of the standard repertoire seems to grapple, in one way or another, with the seemingly inescapable friction between societal convention and sexual freedom. But, of course, those operas aren't merely about sex.

To be fair, *Three Way* isn't just about sex, either. David Cote's clever, literate, economical and often hilarious libretto hints at the role sex plays in our quest for intimacy and fulfilment. Yet none of the characters is developed to the point where I felt any empathetic connection. The trilogy comes across more like television-style entertainment tied up in a quasi-philosophical bow, as is often done with sitcoms, so that when the programme is over one doesn't feel one's time has been entirely wasted. No, what's missing, to be blunt, is music that provides more than just a well-wrought soundtrack.

To his credit, Paterson knows how to set a text to music so that the words are easily understandable and flow naturally. And there are rare glimmers of real, thought-provoking emotion. In *The Companion*, near the end of Joe the android's aria ('7:05am: I made you breakfast in bed'), a touching strain of melancholy creeps into the music, raising questions about what Joe might actually be capable of feeling. I felt a faint pang, too, for the bitter frustration of the tech support guy Dax in his aria ('I know how it works'). But the music never really digs any deeper, and often relies on what's obvious and predictable. *Safe Word* is coloured by film noir harmonies (so many diminished chords!) and the two protagonists slip into bluesy, sleazy, strip-clubby song. *Masquerade* in some ways offers the richest opportunities for more nuanced characterisation but fails to deliver. It all sounds rehearsed: macho Larry's tango about erectile dysfunction, for instance, and the Sondheim-esque trio 'Watching, apart' – except that Sondheim's music always puts his characters' emotions into sharp focus.

Three Way was well received at both its 2017 Nashville Opera premiere and later performances at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. This recording features the original cast, whose singing is admirable for its textual clarity and less so for its vocal allure. The standouts are Eliza Bonet and Matthew Treviño – the dominatrix and her client in *Safe Word* – who attack their roles with aptly unnerving ferocity. The dry acoustic of the studio recording flatters neither the cast nor the dozen members of the Nashville Opera Orchestra.

Andrew Farach-Colton

Porpora

Germanico in Germania

Max Emanuel Cencic *counterten*..... Germanico
Julia Lezhneva *sop*..... Ersinda
Mary-Ellen Nesi *mez*..... Arminio
Juan Sancho *ten*..... Segeste
Dilyara Idrisova *sop*..... Rosmonda
Hasnaa Bennani *sop*..... Cecina
Capella Cracoviensis / Jan Tomasz Adamus
 Decca ® ③ 483 1523DHO3 (3h 38' • DDD)

Includes synopsis, Italian libretto and translation



Nicola Porpora was long famous by association rather than through his own

music. In the early 1750s he was mentor to the young Haydn, who for a time also served as his valet. Three decades earlier he had taught the castratos Farinelli and Caffarelli, while his peripatetic operatic career included a spell as rival to Handel in London. The human voice was his speciality. And it is hardly surprising that the Neapolitan composer-cum-teacher, at the height of his fame in the 1720s and '30s, knew exactly how to display his singers' technical prowess to optimum effect. *Germanico in Germania*, the first complete Porpora opera on disc, is an eloquent case in point.

Premiered in Rome in 1732, the opera centres on the conflict between Germanico, Roman commander in feudal Germania, and the proudly independent Germanic chieftain Arminio. Further complications arise from the Roman allegiance of the chieftain Segeste, whose elder daughter Rosmonda is Arminio's wife. Predictably, all comes right in the end, with a 12th-hour reconciliation (dealt with in two minutes of *secco* recitative) and a final ensemble hymning the future union of the Rhine and the Tiber. That the action can be creaky and the characterisation two-dimensional would not have bothered Porpora's Roman audiences one iota. What they came to see, and got in abundance, was a celebration of vocal virtuosity from an all-male cast (women being banned by papal edict) featuring two of the leading castratos of the day: Domenico Annibali in the title-role (he would later sing the title-role in Handel's *Arminio*) and, as his antagonist Arminio, Caffarelli, who even by castrato standards was something of a colleague-from-hell.

While bravura brilliance can occasionally become an end in itself, and some of the arias sound too jolly and/or mellifluous for the situation, Porpora's invention rises well above Italian Baroque routine. Reflecting

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the singers' star billing in 1732, Germanico and Arminio have some of the finest, certainly the fieriest, music. This recording was planned in part as a showcase for the countertenor Max Emanuel Cencic, who tosses off Germanico's seething 'rage' aria 'Qual turbine' with devil-may-care virtuosity and reveals the full beauty and depth of his tone in the introspective 'Nasce da valle impura', one of the opera's few slow arias. Mary-Ellen Nesi is his equal in swaggering brilliance, using the bright blade in her mezzo to thrilling effect in Arminio's vehement denunciations of Germanico – and never mind the odd moment when her singing teeters on the edge of wildness. Invariably expressive with words, Nesi effectively softens her tone for the touching aria of parting in Act 2, one of the score's jewels.

The other singers are all up to the composer's virtuoso demands, though neither the impressive soprano Dilyara Idrisova as Rosmonda nor Julia Lezhneva as her younger sister Ersinda entirely avoid the trap of making their coloratura sound like a mechanical vocalise. More distinct words from both would have helped. In her defence, Idrisova's despairing accompanied recitative and aria with obbligato horn at the end of Act 1 are superbly vivid. The bell-like soprano Hasnaa Bennani (dazzlingly agile in another horn-fuelled aria) makes her mark as Cecina, the Roman captain in love with Ersinda, and Juan Sancho brings a clean, no-nonsense tenor and plenty of temperament to Segeste's combustible arias.

Jan Tomasz Adamus's direction of the Kraków period orchestra (including raucous, high-testosterone horns) is stronger on energy than subtlety, though the players are not ideally served by a rather dry, close acoustic. Some of the tempos, not least in Ersinda's joyful reunion aria 'Sorge dall'onde', sound remorselessly driven, and the singers' ornamentation can go way over the top. But you could argue that this is all in keeping with an art form predicated on excess. Performed with such virtuoso aplomb, above all by Cencic and Nesi, *Germanico in Germania* well justifies the booklet's billing as 'a veritable feast of vocal delights ripe for resurrection'.

Richard Wigmore

Puccini

La rondine

Elena Moșuc sop Magda de Civry
Siobhan Stagg sop Yvette/Georgette
Elbenita Kajtazi sop Bianca/Gabriella
Yosep Kang ten Ruggero

Álvaro Zambrano ten Prunier
Evelin Novak sop Lisette
Stephanie Lauricella mez Suzy/Lolette
Jan-Hendrik Rootering bass-bar Rambaldo
Bavarian Radio Chorus; Munich Radio Orchestra /
Ivan Repušić

CPO ⑥ ② CPO555 075-2 (100' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Prinzregententheater,
Munich, October 9-11, 2015

Includes synopsis and Italian libretto



Puccini's wartime attempt to emulate the success of Lehár has always

been the dark sheep of his output. But *La rondine* is arguably his most tender, open-hearted and charming work: eschewing grand passion, it is brief, packed with melody, disarmingly beautiful, and quietly and modestly tragic. There are echoes of *La traviata*, of course, but it might usefully be understood to have a similar relationship to *La bohème* as Strauss's *Arabella* does to *Der Rosenkavalier*: an oft-misunderstood, ill-starred return to the site of previous triumph.

This is also reflected in the catalogue, with previous high-profile recordings spread out across the decades and existing primarily as vehicles for their *prime donne*: Anna Moffo in the 1960s, Kiri Te Kanawa (with Domingo) in the early 1980s. In the following decade, Angela Gheorghiu and Roberto Alagna (under the young Antonio Pappano) burst on to the scene with the work on EMI – a set that was crowned *Gramophone's* Recording of the Year in 1997.

That recording is quite an act to follow, not least for Elena Moșuc, a Romanian like Gheorghiu. She does a good job in presenting a fully fledged character as Magda, though, especially as matters get more serious in the third act. Earlier on, where a cleanly soaring upper range is at a premium, the voice too often takes on a slightly acid tang and swoops around – a major drawback, alas, in this role.

There's much to enjoy in the rest of the cast, though, especially from Yosep Kang's ardent and Italianate Ruggero: to my mind, this elegant tenor can stand comparison with any other performer of the role in the catalogue. Álvaro Zambrano is a suave and sweet-voiced Prunier, though not quite as flexible as Pappano's William Matteuzzi. Evelin Novak sparkles as Lisette, and the rest of the smaller roles are very well taken.

Ivan Repušić does a good job with his new Munich orchestra (he began as their principal conductor at the start of the

2017-18 season). He elicits playing that is idiomatic and seductive, although the big waltz in Act 2 (disc 1, track 14, from 4'25") arguably feels a bit more beer hall than Moulin Rouge, and he can't match the flexibility and sheer luxuriousness we get from Pappano.

CPO's sound, too, sounds hard-edged when compared to the sumptuous yield and depth of that earlier recording. And be warned: though the booklet contains the libretto, the only translation we get is into German. **Hugo Shirley**

Selected comparison:

Pappano (5/97) (EMI/WARN) 640748-2

Rossini

Ricciardo e Zoraide

Maxim Mironov ten Ricciardo
Alessandra Marianelli sop Zoraide
Randall Bills ten Agorante
Nahuel Di Piero bass Ircano
Silvia Beltrami mez Zomira
Artavazd Sargsyan ten Ernesto
Diana Mian sop Fatima
Anna Brull mez Elmira
Bartosz Żolubak ten Zamorre
Camerata Bach Choir, Poznań; Virtuosi Brunensis
/ José Miguel Pérez-Sierra

Naxos ⑩ ③ 8 660419/21 (166' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Trinkhalle, Bad Wildbad,
Germany, July 15-20, 2013

Includes synopsis; Italian libretto available from
naxos.com



Ricciardo e Zoraide was written for the Teatro San Carlo in Naples in 1818, midway through

Rossini's seven-year residency in the city. A tale of love, jealousy and honour involving a Nubian tyrant, a lovelorn Paladin, an Asian princess and a put-upon royal spouse, its libretto was mined from an early 18th-century mock-heroic epic by the poet Niccolò Forteguerri. The Neapolitans enjoyed it rather more than they had enjoyed *Otello*, Rossini's previous piece with a black protagonist.

The opera held the stage until 1846, then vanished until its revival at the 1990 Pesaro Rossini Festival, when Riccardo Chailly conducted a newly completed Critical Edition. The production lost both its lead tenors before it opened. Chris Merritt (the Nubian Agorante) fell out with the management and Rockwell Blake (the Paladin Ricciardo) was indisposed. But it's an ill wind. Their talented replacements, Bruce Ford and William Matteuzzi, made their international reputations with the production.

GRAMOPHONE *Focus*

HIS AND HER VERDI

Mark Pullinger listens to two opera stars singing Verdi roles they have not yet performed on stage, with mixed results



Sunshine beaming through the voice: Joseph Calleja excels in his selection of Verdi arias

Verdi

Aida – Se quel guerrier io fossi! ... Celeste Aida.

Don Carlo – Dio, che nell'alma infondere^a.

La forza del destino – Invano, Alvaro^a; La vita è inferno all'infelice! ... Oh, tu che in seno agli angeli. **Otello** – Dio! mi potevi scagliar; Già nella notte densa^b; Niun mi tema; Oh' mostruosa colpa! Sì, per ciel marmoreo giuro!^a.

Il trovatore – Ah! sì, ben moi^b; Di quella pira
Joseph Calleja *ten* with Angela Gheorghiu *sop*
Vittorio Vitelli *bar* Orquestra de la Comunitat Valenciana / Ramón Tebar

Decca © 483 1539DH (65' • DDD)

Includes texts and translations

Verdi

'The Verdi Album'

Attila – Liberamente or piangi ... Oh! nel fuggente nuvolo. **Don Carlo** – Tu che la vanità ... Francia, nobile suol. **La forza del destino** – Pace! pace, mio Dio!. **Luisa Miller** – Tu puniscimi, o Signore. **Nabucco** – Anch'io dischiuso un giorno ... Salgo già del trono aurato. **Otello** – Ave Maria, piena di grazia. **Simon Boccanegra** – Come in quest'ora bruna. **Stiffelio** – Tosto ei disse! ... A te ascenda, o Dio clemente. **Il trovatore** – Tacea la notte placida ... Di tale amor che dirsi

Sonya Yoncheva *soprano*

Munich Radio Orchestra / Massimo Zanetti

Sony Classical © 88985 41798-2 (55' • DDD)

Includes texts and translations



What is the purpose of a disc of arias from operas the singer has never performed? An audition tape? Trying on the role for size? Sometimes they can be a great success and there are notable examples of singers recording complete operas they never sang on stage (Maria Callas, for example, never performed *La bohème* or *Carmen*). While Joseph Calleja's new disc of Verdi arias is an exciting signal of intention, the tenor seeming entirely comfortable even in roles as daunting as Otello, Sonya Yoncheva does not yet sound the right scale for some of the lirico-spinto repertoire on her Verdi album. The latter is an example of a singer 'jumping the gun' in committing interpretations to disc where they've barely begun to scratch the surface.

Calleja is not a clarion trumpeter but his tenor is tinted with soft golden hues, sunshine beaming through the voice much the same way as it did with Luciano Pavarotti. Coloured with

a gentle flutter of vibrato, though much less prominent than in his early days, it has an old-school quality of a Björling or Di Stefano, which is high praise indeed. The honeyed ease with which he floats phrases in Don Alvaro's aria from *La forza del destino* is winning and he makes Radamès' paean to 'Celeste Aida' beautifully eloquent. In interview, Calleja has pointed out that you don't need a barnstorming tenor to sing Manrico; there's poetry in the phrasing of 'Ah, sì ben mio' followed by a spirited 'Di quella pira' cabaletta.

Decca's disc is intelligently programmed, with a selection of duets to offer more rounded character portraits, with around 25 minutes of music from *Otello* to close. Vittorio Vitelli, a serviceable baritone if a bit pedestrian, partners Calleja in the glorious Friendship Duet from *Don Carlo* along with the final Alvaro-Carlo encounter from *Forza* where Alvaro is goaded into a duel, and 'Sì, per ciel marmorio giuro' once Iago has planted the seeds of jealousy into Otello's fragile mind. Calleja is lyrical and tender in the *Otello* love duet opposite the Desdemona of Angela Gheorghiu, who is more affecting here than in her blowsy, overwrought contribution to 'Di quella pira'.

'Dio mi potevi' is scrupulously sung but it's here that you detect the tell-tale sign that Otello is a role Calleja's yet to perform on stage. Despite beautifully observed dynamics, it's the same with 'Niun mi tema'. Only with stage experience will Calleja start to get under the Moor's skin. Ramón Tebar and the Orquestra de la Comunitat Valenciana offer solid support, although the great clarinet solo from *Forza* – an aria in itself – lacks a little silk.

Yoncheva has often impressed me enormously. Her Violetta at Covent Garden had me weeping buckets and her Norma, which she learnt at pretty short notice, was incredibly accomplished. But a lot of the repertoire here is on the lirico-spinto side of the repertoire – which is probably where her voice is heading, but it's not quite there yet. The creaminess which seduced me in her 'Paris, mon amour' (6/15) disc is less evident here, replaced by a steely glint.

The one role on the disc that she had performed by the time of Sony's recording (in April 2017) was Desdemona in *Otello* at the Metropolitan Opera the previous autumn, which she reprises next

season. We're deprived the Willow Song (alas) but her 'Ave Maria' is beautifully heartfelt and poised, aside from a less than secure A flat before her final 'amen'. She recently sang her first Elisabeth de Valois in a starrily-cast Paris production of the original French version of *Don Carlos*. Here, we have the Italian revision, and Elisabetta's 'Tu che le vanità' pushes Yoncheva to the limit of her resources. At times the voice sounds fragile, although her phrasing is always sensitive. Another upcoming role is Luisa Miller and she attacks 'Tu puniscimi, o Signore' with admirable spirit.

Of the other roles, I cannot imagine her wanting to take on Odabella (*Attila*) or Abigail (*Nabucco*), which require a more fearless blade that can shred lighter voices. However, she enjoys Odabella's more lyrical moments, coping with coloratura runs gracefully. Of the roles that will suit her – in time – her Amelia (*Simon Boccanegra*) is attractively sung and there's admirable agility in her cabaletta from Act 1 of *Il trovatore*. Another Leonora – from *La forza del destino* – fits Yoncheva to perfection, the final 'malediziones' in the aria 'Pace, pace mio Dio!' incisively driven.

I was sometimes reminded of Angela Gheorghiu's early 'Verdi Heroines' disc (Decca, 7/00), which also contained a lot of roles she never went on to perform (Elisabetta was a big loss when she withdrew from Nicholas Hytner's Royal Opera production). Gheorghiu's voice had more luscious weight than Yoncheva's (as yet) although some of her lower notes also had an unattractive vampish quality. Gheorghiu enjoyed the support of Riccardo Chailly and his La Verdi orchestra and they're more naturally suited to this rep than the Munich Radio Orchestra under Massimo Zanetti for Yoncheva. Just listen to the introduction to 'Come in quest'ora bruna' from *Boccanegra*: with Chailly, the dawn comes to vivid life, the birds chirrup and swirl above the Grimaldi palace and there is a gentle ebb-and-flow rubato to the main aria; in Munich, it's a little more plodding and unimaginative.

Texts and translations are included in both discs but contexts are clumsily contained in Sony's dreadfully written booklet note, with empty sentences like 'The communication between men and women is a powerful engine of Verdi's dramas'. Tsk. **G**

Five years later, Ford and Matteuzzi recorded the work for Opera Rara with a cast that included Nelly Miricioiu as Zoraide, Della Jones as Agorante's scorned wife Zomira and Alastair Miles powerful in the role of Ircano, Zoraide's father and pretender to the Nubian throne. The set still sounds well and its scholarly programme book, complete with full text and English translation, remains an important selling-point.

The new set – cheaper but less lavishly provisioned – derives from a concert performance recorded at the 2013 Rossini in Wildbad Festival. The star of the occasion is the Russian coloratura tenor Maxim Mironov. His Ricciardo matches Matteuzzi's in virtuosity while surpassing it in tonal beauty. Conversely, it would be idle to pretend that Randall Bills is Ford's equal. Ford's command of line is in a different league, as is his ability to deal with the darkened vocal colours – notorious low As and A flats – with which Rossini characterises the Nubian king.

On the distaff side, Wildbad fields a first-rate Zomira, Silvia Beltrami. Their Zoraide, Alessandra Marianelli, is a sympathetic presence but she is no match for Opera Rara's Nelly Miricioiu, who is better able to husband her vocal resources in moments of crisis and is the superior technician in the exquisite Act 2 canon quartet.

The conductor José Miguel Pérez-Sierra takes a sympathetic view of the music but, unlike Opera Rara's David Parry, is too much inclined merely to follow the singers. There is also a degree of belligerence about Parry's direction of the end-of-act finales that prevents the drama slipping off piste into *opera buffa* territory.

The live concert recording deals effectively with the opera's innovatory spatial effects. (This is the work in which the onstage *banda* first becomes part of Italian opera's *batterie de cuisine*.) There is, however, a problem with the recording of the tenors' great Act 2 duet of 'reconciliation', where a poorly positioned Mironov appears to be standing behind his antagonist. **Richard Osborne**

Comparative version:

Parry (4/97) (OPRA) ORC14

R Strauss

Der Rosenkavalier

Camilla Nylund *sop* Die Feldmarschallin
Paula Murrihy *mez* Octavian
Peter Rose *bass* Baron Ochs
Hanna-Elisabeth Müller *sop* Sophie
Martin Gantner *bar* Faninal
Chorus of Dutch National Opera; Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra / Marc Albrecht

Challenge Classics ③ ④ ⑤ CC72741

(3h 13' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Dutch National Opera, Amsterdam, September 16, 19, 24 & 27, 2015

Includes synopsis



I would like to have seen on DVD the Dutch company's 50th-anniversary

production of no fewer than four performances from which this new release was drawn. For once the stage director Jan Phillip Gloger went the whole hog and updated the action to the present day. Its effect on what we hear seems to have been wholly beneficial, encouraging a cast which in *Rosenkavalier* terms is quite young – and might still be called promising – to pay especial attention to the text.

Peter Rose's Ochs is strong of both rustic accent and aristocratic mien, never a clown but pointedly funny in his fear after he is wounded by Octavian. In that latter role Paula Murrihy continues a distinct Irish tradition (Murray, Erraught) encompassing both aristocratic lover and the false 'Mariandel' with aplomb and precision in ensemble. Hanna-Elisabeth Müller's Sophie floats the high notes that Strauss indulgently but mercilessly gave her in Act 2 with almost insolent ease. And Camilla Nylund's Marschallin, in pure voice, has special colours and sadnesses to bring to the character's confusion and disappointment in the Act 1 clocks monologue and when confronting the Octavian/Sophie relationship.

The whole is welded together by the forthright leadership of Marc Albrecht, now on his third recorded major Strauss opera. This is not a dreamy indulgent *Rosenkavalier* but a sparky up-tempo one which is not afraid (like the old George Szell performance) to remind listeners that, for all its *Gemütlichkeit*, this was the work that immediately followed *Elektra*: the quite modern sounds that Strauss evoked for the Lerchenau servants disturbing the Faninal household are positively encouraged. There are some traditional minor snips but no worry (go for the studio Erich Kleiber or Solti if you want every bar). The recording is both clear and lifelike and I hope the Netherlands Philharmonic get the attention they deserve for a virtuoso reading on pit duty of this lengthy and complex score. *Rosenkavalier* on disc is a field of big, big names (the Kleibers, Karajans and the old Busch perhaps dominant) – not to mention the DVDs – but this new issue is a bright competitor. **Mike Ashman**

The Editors of Gramophone's sister music magazines, Jazzwise and Songlines, recommend some of their favourite recordings from the past month

Jazz

Brought to you by **jazzwise**

Kurt Elling

The Questions

OKeh Records (P) 8898 549283-2



With an eclectic song list that ranges from Bob Dylan and Paul Simon to standards and originals, *The Questions* presents

Kurt Elling's musical response to our troubled times. His take on Dylan's end of days epic, album opener 'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall', is a *coup de théâtre*, the singer declaiming the apocalyptic verses with the potency of an Old Testament prophet. Previously recorded on *1619 Broadway: The Brill Building Project*, Elling revisits Simon's 'American Tune' as a sorrowing chorale, with lines such as "Still when I think of the road we're travelling on, I wonder what's gone wrong?" reverberating especially strongly. In beautiful arrangements of Peter

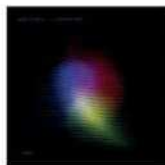
Gabriel's 'Washing of the Water', Carla Bley's 'Lawns', 'Lonely Town' and 'Skylark', the sense of zoning in on the emotional essence of the song is paramount, with Elling's immaculate legato squeezing the emotion out of every note. Whether reinventing classic protest songs or appending new lyrical flights of fancy to existing compositions, this is a collection that resonates powerfully in the memory.

Peter Quinn

GoGo Penguin

A Humdrum Star

Blue Note (P) 6716431



Interviewing GoGoPenguin has sometimes left me disappointed that their ideas' boundless ambition, the sense that they'd like to take jazz

musicianship to the stars or else shake it to pieces, can't be contained by this band's actual strictures. *A Humdrum Star*, though, makes me grateful for what GoGo Penguin are. The reliance on minimalist, looping riffs existing on the cusp of Philip Glass and Goldie is less marked on this fourth album. As its predecessor *Man Made Object*'s title indicated, compositions are again sometimes begun electronically by drummer Rob Turner, then performed as acoustically as possible, pushing self-imposed restrictions to the limit à la rock's analogue maverick Jack White. With 'fourth GoGo' Brendan Williams' production aid, this is an album of textures more than riffs. Chris Illingworth's piano glistens in sharp, summer brightness on 'Bardo'; Turner's choppy churn falls away from Nick Blacka's acoustic contemplation. The nirvana GoGo Penguin sometimes seek beyond the dancehall is nearer here. **Nick Hasted**

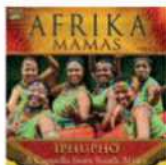
World Music

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Afrika Mamas

Iphupho: A Cappella from South Africa

ARC Music (P) EUCD2771



Afrika Mamas' fourth album, *Iphupho* (New Dreams), beautifully encapsulates the magic of sisterhood and the

central role that community plays in traditional Zulu culture. This inspiring group of six *a cappella* singers paint vivid pictures through song of everyday life in KwaZulu-Natal. All are mothers and, originally inspired by Ladysmith Black Mambazo, the singers have performed together for 20 years, dazzling audiences around the world with their wide range of vocal tones and seamless harmonies. Most compelling about this album is the mix between lively, call-and-response songs and deep themes that illuminate the

complexities of modern South Africa. 'Ulwabishi', meaning rubbish, tells of a man who doesn't support his family and still expects food on the table. Led by Sindisiwe Khumalo, it's a surprisingly playful song that embodies the power of women standing together. Raw traces of blues, R&B and jazz can be heard throughout the album, but ultimately Iphupho is a moving and honest tribute to traditional Zulu music. **Franki Black**

Erlend Apneseth Trio

Åra

Hubro (P) HUBROCD2584



Erlend Apneseth is on the move again. His previous albums have investigated a more purist Norwegian folk and electro-acoustic improvisation, here the Norwegian

Hardanger fiddler arrives at the culmination point of all of his work over the past three years. The contents of this album itself are varied, although springing from the individualist palette of the leader, alongside Stephan Meidell (baritone acoustic guitar) and Øyvind Hegg-Lunde (drums and percussion). The traditional and the synthetic are married in a deep cave of melancholic melody, with 'Tundra' sounding like Ry Cooder transposed to the northern wastelands; the trio's instruments are expertly and closely woven. Sometimes it's difficult to place the sound sources; indeed, the eerie 'Saga' features a mystery archive recording of a musical saw, its player unknown. Åra has a remarkable range of moods and textures, the pieces growing from single-voice melodies (invariably courtesy of Apneseth), and always negotiated with a calm authority. **Martin Longley**

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MUSICAL CONNECTIONS

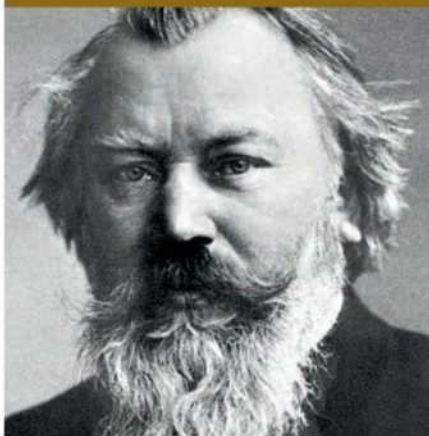
James Jolly takes us on two listening journeys inspired by this month's cover story

Brahms and Variations

This first listening journey prompted by this month's Brahms from the Scottish Chamber Orchestra takes in six sets of Brahms's variations, a form that fascinated him throughout his composing life, ranging from his Op 1 (the First Piano Sonata with its second-movement set of variations) to his Op 120 (the Second Clarinet Sonata's finale). His first exploration of the form for piano is the **Variations on a Hungarian Song** from 1835. It draws great energy from the alternating 3/4 and 4/4 bars, allied to a robustness that, surprisingly, offers considerable scope for elaboration (try Julius Katchen from his classic Decca set). The next set, the **Variations on a theme by Schumann**, Op 19, is a much stronger work, drawing on the fourth of Schumann's Op 99 *Bunte Blätter*. But Schumann does more than provide the theme; his spirit seems to infuse Brahms's work, even offering a dual identity (echoing the elder composer's Florestan and Eusebius). András Schiff is a poetic guide. The Hungarian Song's twin, the **Variations on an Original Theme** (Op 21 No 1), probably came next – a work of wonderful poise and emotional depth which, interestingly, draws its variation potential from the theme's *harmonic* rather than melodic or rhythmic promise (though it has a lovely hymn-like aura all of its own). Barry Douglas, in his fine Chandos piano survey, does it proud. Brahms's next set of variations started life as chamber work (the second movement of the First String Sextet) but Clara Schumann pleaded for a piano version, and the composer complied with the lovely **Theme and Variations in D minor** as a birthday present. It's a gorgeous piece with remarkable breadth and allusion (Bach is hovering somewhere in the background much of the time). In 1861, Brahms wrote one of his greatest sets of piano variations, **Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel**, drawing the theme from one of the harpsichord suites. It's a magnificent achievement, displaying consummate craftsmanship for the instrument and a powerful dynamism that hurls the work at the final fugue. Murray Perahia's recording won him a *Gramophone* Award. The **Variations on a Theme of Paganini**, in two books (each with 14 variations), is a virtuoso masterpiece of invention and imagination, and needs a pianist of Yuja Wang's fearless technique to make light of the work's staggering demands. She doesn't fail us!

Variations on a Hungarian Song Katchen Decca
Variations on a theme by Schumann A Schiff Decca
Variations on an Original Theme Douglas Chandos
Theme and Variations in D minor Lupu Decca
Variations and Fugue on a Theme by Handel
 Perahia Sony Classical
Variations on a Theme of Paganini Wang DG

Brahms as symphonist is this month's issue focus, but here we explore his fascination with variation form, and take a stroll through Sir Charles Mackerras's rich SCO discography



Brahms starts our two journeys this month

SCO and Mackerras

Brahms from Robin Ticciati with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra inevitably stirs up memories of Sir Charles Mackerras's Brahms recordings from 1997, but rather than choose part of that set, I suggest Sir Charles's 1998 SCO recording of the **First Serenade**, one that emerged with glowing colours from Andrew Farach-Colton's *Gramophone* Collection last May. It was Mackerras – who enjoyed a long and fruitful relationship with the SCO – who instilled into the orchestra a style of playing that was truly 'historically aware'. The earliest repertoire they recorded together was the music of **Handel**, and, joined by Bryn Terfel, they produced a collection of remarkable subtlety from players and singer alike. The music of Mozart seemed to draw from Mackerras a very special quality of

insight and expression, and he and the SCO recorded a lot of Mozart together, including many of the operas, the Requiem, concertos and symphonies. Of the operas that came off the page beautifully were *Idomeneo* and *Le nozze di Figaro*. The EMI recording of *Idomeneo* featured Ian Bostridge in the title-role, admirable supported by a cast that included Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, Lisa Milne, Barbara Fritoli and Anthony Rolfe Johnson. It was a recording that led Stanley Sadie to superlatives: 'this new set, enshrining Mackerras's profound and mature understanding of the music, is the most moving performance of the opera, perhaps of any opera, that I have heard on records, and I urge readers to buy it.' The Telarc **Figaro**, with a strong cast of Alastair Miles, Nuccia Focile, Alessandro Corbelli, Carol Vaness and Susanne Mentzer is a real ensemble production, strongly cast and, interestingly (and authentically) with a vocally lower-lying Figaro than Count. Mackerras keeps everything fizzing and never neglects the darker elements of the rich piece. As SS wrote at the time: 'if this isn't the most polished or most beautifully sung *Figaro* to be had, it is undoubtedly one of the liveliest and most dramatic and I cannot imagine anyone listening to it without coming away uplifted in spirit'. Equally rewarding, and still with Mozart, were the piano concertos Mackerras recorded with Alfred Brendel. In **K271** and **K503**, and **K466** and **491**, these two great Mozartians dig deep, bringing out so much character in this infinitely rewarding music.



To explore these playlists via a streaming service, or to create your own, we suggest qobuz.com. You can listen to these particular playlists at gramophone.co.uk/playlists

Brahms Serenade No 1 SCO / Mackerras Telarc
Handel Arias Terfel; SCO / Mackerras DG
Mozart Idomeneo SCO / Mackerras Warner Classics
Mozart Le nozze di Figaro SCO / Mackerras Telarc
Mozart Piano Concertos, K271 & 503 Brendel; SCO / Mackerras Decca
Mozart Piano Concertos, K466 & 491 Brendel; SCO / Mackerras Decca

REISSUES & ARCHIVE

Our monthly guide to the most exciting catalogue releases, historic issues and box-sets

BOX-SET ROUND-UP PAGE 123

ROB COWAN'S REPLAY PAGE 124

CLASSICS RECONSIDERED PAGE 126

How complete is 'complete'?

Two major anniversary box-sets explore Debussy's music in great depth – **Rob Cowan** unpacks them

To posit a claim of 'completeness' is tantamount to throwing down a very conspicuous gauntlet. Invariably there's something that someone somewhere will complain hasn't been included. Here, we have two neatly packaged sets, both carrying the impressive legend 'The Complete Works'. DG comes clean by stating that its Edition 'contains at least one version of all the composer's music published in his lifetime as well as some posthumously issued juvenilia and fragmentary works'. By comparison, Warner announces a rather more ambitious project, claiming: 'the Complete Edition brings together all Debussy's known works,' then go on to excuse the exclusion of a currently unavailable 1882 orchestral Intermezzo, though its set does include a piano duet version of the piece. Rigorous indeed: Warner's enterprise is truly a labour of both love and scholarship.

A comparative disc count gives some clue as to who offers the most comprehensive deal. DG's set runs to 22 CDs, three of which are devoted to an 'historical bonus' ('historical' in a chronologically modern sense), though the main body of the collection includes other memorable sessions that fall into roughly the same category – Gérard Souzay's 1961 Debussy song recital, for example, Tamás Vásáry playing selected piano works and a version of *Le Martyre de saint Sébastien* under Ernest Ansermet with Suzanne Danco but without the narration. Warner on the other hand includes André Cluytens' roughly contemporaneous narrated set with soloists Rita Gorr, Solange Michel and Martha Angelici that has already appeared in the admirable André Cluytens box but is no less welcome in the present context.

DG's historic trawl also includes Karajan's 1961 Berlin *La mer*, David Oistrakh and Frieda Bauer in the Violin Sonata (Warner opts for the rougher-edged Menuhin/Jacques Février version as the work's

only performance), piano selections with Michelangeli (*Images* and *Children's Corner*), Friedrich Gulda, Monique Haas, Claudio Arrau and Sviatoslav Richter, as well as the LaSalle Quartet deploying maximum intelligence in the String Quartet, all of them deeply memorable performances, and, most interestingly, orchestrated songs with Souzay conducted by Edouard Lindenberg and *L'Enfant prodigue* under Debussy's friend and expert interpreter Désiré-Émile Inghelbrecht.

Think of the two collections as generously filled Debussy hobbyist 'tool boxes'

Surprisingly both sets include the same 2009 recordings of *L'Enfant prodigue* and *Le Gladiateur* under Hervé Niquet, the latter work previously unknown to me but musically rewarding. And this is not the only duplicated material, though it's the most substantial. A pity though that only Warner includes the attractive orchestral version of the First Suite for Orchestra (with François-Xavier Roth and Les Siècles). Even more impressive than *Le Gladiateur* is the opera *Rodrigue at Chimène* (1890-1893) composed en route to *Pelléas* with which it shares many salient features, music that impressed Dukas for its exquisiteness and harmonic subtlety and that is presented by Warner in an arrangement by Richard Langham Smith, imaginatively orchestrated by Edison Denisov. As to the music's style, think of Debussy chancing upon Mussorgsky, whose music he loved. Only Warner lays claim to this significant scoop. The conductor is Kent Nagano and the star of the cast is unquestionably José van Dam who sings the role of Don Diège.

As to *Pelléas* itself, three versions of this rapturously beautiful 'drame lyrique' are

shared between the two sets, with Warner providing a tiny additional fragment featuring an intense Mary Garden (who sang in the world premiere) with Debussy himself at the piano. They also perform three of the *Ariettes oubliées*. Warner offers us a fine 1979 recording of the complete work with the Monte-Carlo National Opera Orchestra under Armin Jordan again with van Dam, this time as an especially tortured Golaud as well as Eric Tappy as Pelléas and Rachel Yakar as Mélisande, whose fragile, animated singing fits the role to a T. And yet Maria Ewing on Claudio Abbado's 1991 Vienna Philharmonic recording for DG seems to me to penetrate the emotional heart of the role more comprehensively and she is also very well supported by François Le Roux as Pelléas and, again, van Dam is Golaud, perhaps even more gripping under Abbado than he was under Jordan. Each conductor homes in on contrasting aspects of the score: Jordan on its myriad shades and shifting moods, Abbado on its linear aspect and extraordinary level of harmonic invention.

Which brings me to DG's DVDs of Peter Stein's Welsh National Opera production where Pierre Boulez conducts. Alison Hagley vividly acts the role of Mélisande and sings very affectingly, Neill Archer is a highly credible Pelléas, Donald Maxwell is deeply troubled and vocally impressive as Golaud and the stooped, grey-bearded and barely mobile Kenneth Cox is a dark-voiced Arkel. Much of the conducting and orchestral playing is extremely sensitive and so is the production, excepting the way certain interludes are visually presented with pages of full score. A bit of a cop-out, this: if ever there was a music drama where the notes need to be invisible (except maybe to students and critics), it's *Pelléas*. Furthermore, the opening scene is austere rather than darkly mysterious, though Act 5 is very moving, both musically and visually.



Debussy: the subject of two anniversary tribute sets



If *Pelléas* is one of the crowning glories in Debussy's output, *La mer* is certainly another. DG offers us a relatively broad and keenly articulated 1989 Roman version under Bernstein and Karajan's sleek, heavily spotlighted 1961 Berlin recording whereas Warner opts for Carlo Maria Giulini's more weathered Philharmonia performance from the following year and two keyboard alternatives, one for piano four-hands prepared by Debussy himself and the other – far preferable in my view – for two pianos arranged by André Caplet. The former includes the brass fanfare-like figures in the stormy finale, as does Karajan in Berlin though neither Bernstein nor Giulini takes that option. There's a theory abroad that the 'tune' for the fanfares (which was in the original score) resembled a popular song of the day and drew titters from contemporary audiences whenever the work was performed, which is why Debussy took it out. This notion seems to me to be substantiated by the fanfares' inclusion in Debussy's own essentially domestic – and therefore non-provocative – duet version. I hope to deal with this issue in more detail when I cover *La mer* for a future *Gramophone* Collection article.

Warner includes various items taken from Jean Martinon's ORTF set of the orchestral works, and of special interest are numerous world-premiere recordings, not least the beginning of *La Chute de la maison Usher* 'as it was when Debussy set the work in 1916' and, most fascinatingly, Debussy's own piano transcription of *Jeux*, which sheds shards of fresh light onto this remarkable work's structure and design. So much more besides, not least piano music shared among the likes of Samson François, Yuri Egorov (magnificent recordings of both books of *Préludes*), Aldo Ciccolini, Pierre-Laurent Aimard (who also plays the *Préludes* in the DG set), and

Jean-Pierre Armengaud. We're additionally given Debussy's transcriptions of the works of other composers, including Saint-Saëns' Second Symphony, and some piano rolls of his own playing, performances that seem to reflect the composer's ideal of a piano 'without hammers'.

DG offers the orchestral *Images* under Bernstein, very atmospheric, and an EMI recording of the saxophone Rhapsody with Jean-Marie Londeix with the ORTF National Orchestra under Jean Martinon whereas Warner chooses John Harle with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields under Sir Neville Marriner conducting, a far mellower alternative. There are numerous shorter pieces under the likes of Eduard van Beinum and Bernard Haitink whose *Gramophone* Award-winning account of *Nocturnes* would surely have made a more appropriate choice than Daniel Barenboim's more heavily etched Paris alternative. Still, we do at least have Pierre Dervaux's wonderful 'Fêtes' and 'Ibéria', dazzling performances with the Colonne Orchestra in crude if vivid stereo sound (and please mind the edits). Debussy's wonderful mélodies and other vocal works proliferate throughout both sets, with such featured singers as Véronique Gens, François le Roux, Gérard Souzay, Barbara Hendricks, Philippe Jaroussky, Alison Hagley, Mady Mesplé and Elly Ameling (Warner) and Suzanne Danco, Hagley, Pierette Alarie, Véronique Dietschy, Christine Schäfer, and Ameling (DG). But I was surprised that Warner, who, unlike DG, does not have a designated 'historical' area, failed to include such indelible gramophone classics as the Maggie Teyte/Alfred Cortot *Fêtes*

Galantes, or recordings by Claire Croiza, Pierre Bernac or Charles Panzéra not to mention Roger Désormière's benchmark *Pelléas* (with Irène Joachim and Jacques Jansen) or, on the purely orchestral front, Toscanini's BBC SO *La mer*, Victor de Sabata's *Jeux* or the crucial early Debussy recordings of Piero Coppola. That said, I was delighted to encounter Jacques Février and the French Radio National Orchestra in the *Fantaisie* for piano and orchestra and the *Six Epigraphes antiques* played by the pianists Geneviève Joy and Jacqueline Robin-Bonneau, a truly delightful recording from 1963.

As for making a final choice, think of the two collections as generously filled Debussy hobbyist 'tool boxes', with many more tools between them than I've had the space to mention. Warner (listed for about £68) offers more ways to access the music, with, as I've already suggested, previously unrecorded repertoire, unpublished versions, unfamiliar piano reductions, arrangements and rare fragments. DG's set (£49), although admirably comprehensive when taken on its own terms, is more for the general collector who wants to avoid a dazzling array of esoterica. Both sets are thoughtfully annotated, the Warner box by Debussy expert and Director of Research at the Institut de recherche sur le patrimoine musical en France Denis Herlin, and DG by French music experts Roger Nichols and Nigel Simeone. Only the DG set offers printed texts and translations for the vocal works, which is a major plus in its favour.

THE RECORDINGS

Debussy Complete Works

Various artists

DG © (22 discs) + 2 DVD 479 8642

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Various artists

Warner Classics © (33 discs) 9029 57367-5

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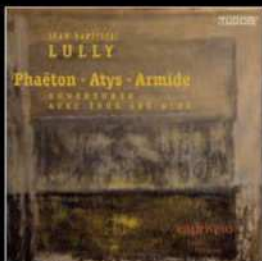
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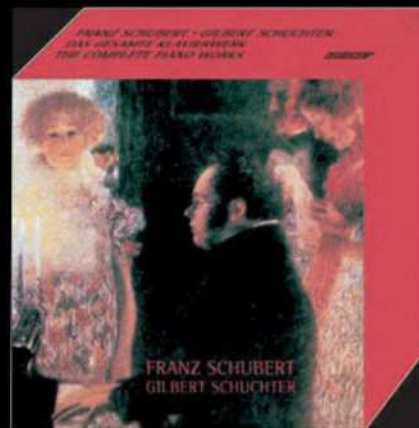


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Celebrating the art of a great mezzo

Mike Ashman enjoys timely tributes from DG and Warner Classics to Christa Ludwig's legacy

Christa Ludwig – whose 90th birthday fell on March 16 – was born literally in the business, the child of two singers (they later became a theatre administrator and a voice teacher) who worked with Herbert von Karajan at the pre-war Aachen Opera. She also spent much of her childhood preparing for another part of her future career by teaching herself Lieder at the home piano.

It was once suggested that Jessye Norman, as a singer of generous voice in multiple styles, would be capable of taking up a range of diverse roles in Wagner's *Ring* cycle. This fantasy was something that Christa Ludwig actually achieved. Her Fricka and Waltraute were officially recorded several times (both are represented on the DG anniversary set) and her career also encompassed a Rhinemaiden, the *Siegfried* Erda (for Leonard Bernstein in Vienna), learning and rehearsing the *Siegfried* Brünnhilde for Karajan and several performances of the *Götterdämmerung* Immolation scene.

Christa Ludwig described a Lied as 'an opera in one minute'

These two new anniversary boxes fortunately contain a contrasting range of material, and not just because of the repertoire available to each company. The Warner Classics box (subtitled **The Complete Recitals**) focuses almost entirely on Lieder in their original recorded format with bonuses. These include first appearances for some substantial Schubert and Brahms (with Gerald Moore and Geoffrey Parsons) and some Reger and Berg under Charles Mackerras. The unmissable 'A Most Unusual Song Recital' from 1965 in tandem with Moore and Ludwig's first husband Walter Berry taps essentially comic songs (Rossini's 'Cats' Duet', Wolf's 'Zur Warnung' and so on), goes Baroque (a duet on 'Sound the trumpet!') and ends with a rather kitsch 'Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht' with orchestra and children's chorus. 'The Shepherd on the Rock and Other Songs with Instrumental Accompaniment' remains



Christa Ludwig's 90th birthday is celebrated in style by DG and Warner

a cleverly varied programme stretching from Schubert to Ravel and Rachmaninov. In addition to Gervase de Peyer's clarinet on the title track, Amaryllis Fleming is the cellist matching Ludwig in the *Chansons madécasses*. There's also Mahler, early on record (1958/59), with both piano (Moore) and orchestra (Adrian Boult, André Vandernoot and Otto Klemperer – the still classic *Das Lied von der Erde*, although Ludwig now says she knew little about the meaning of 'Der Abschied' in this work until doing it with Bernstein).

Warner provides the original covers for the discs. These, and the successively updating photos of the singer in the booklet, parallel the change of styles in Lieder interpretation at the time and as a part of Ludwig's own career. Her Schubert, for example, matures from the straightforward, pretty and innocent in her 1957 work in London with Moore to a more interventionist and dramatic approach in her 1969 Brahms recital with Geoffrey Parsons. Then there's the risk-taking of the live 1972 Vienna Brahms concert, including the *Zigeunerlieder*, with Bernstein (borrowed from Sony Classical) with a more daring use of colour altogether. Fittingly the maestro's accompaniment, less clean than that of the contemporary London-based repetiteurs, goes all out for atmosphere, absolutely like Ludwig's description of a Lied as 'an opera in one minute'. It contributes an audible dialogue in progress with the voice.

Opera enters the picture for real in the imposing-looking DG set. Here are selected performances under the

three men Ludwig calls 'meine Dirigenten' – Karajan (Wagner, Puccini, Richard Strauss's *Dyer's Wife* and Beethoven), Karl Böhm (from Decca's early Vienna Mozarts, the live *Tristan* and a Salzburg Marschallin), Bernstein (from *Candide*). Refreshingly clear interviews with Thomas Voigt (on CD as well as translated in the booklet) and James Jolly spell out her particular relationship with each conductor. There's a frank but unemotional account of Karajan ruining her mother Eugenie Besalla's voice by having her sing Elektra and then Ulrica and Azucena – but Ludwig insists that one could always say 'no' to him, as she did with Brünnhilde. Her fire

for Bernstein burns especially bright; we hear her in extracts also from his (later) Mahler Second and Third and Bernstein's own *Jeremiah* Symphony – which she championed after his death.

There are some less interesting items in this DG set. Although Ludwig's singing maintains its laser-like focus, advances of time and scholarship have passed some of the Bach (including Karajan's *St Matthew Passion* and B minor Mass) by. The disc of 'Great Songs and Arias with Various Conductors' allows too tiny peeps into Ludwig's wider non-German repertoire. Less and longer would have meant more, although it's instructive and exciting to be reminded of her *Elektra* Klytämnestra and Judith in Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle*.

Lastly, a challenging work with which she chose to make several of her farewells: *Winterreise* recorded with James Levine and, fittingly, in the Brahms-Saal of the Vienna Musikverein. A case of opera in 74 minutes. As with Lieder throughout her discography its story is never over-dramatised but clearly and compellingly told within well-absorbed musical boundaries. Ludwig's legacy has been collected before but these new boxes showcase, on the whole, great samples of great singing, and the interviews add a special detail.

THE RECORDINGS

The Christa Ludwig Edition

DG © 12 479 8707

Christa Ludwig - The Complete Recitals on Warner Classics

Warner Classics © 11 9029 56902-0

A welcome reminder of a genius pianist

Bryce Morrison welcomes an RCA set devoted to the unconventional André Tchaikowsky

André Tchaikowsky (1935–82) was a pianist who scorned convention and decorum and, with breathtaking audacity, went his own way, never less than true to his conflicted and extraordinary nature. His death at the age of 46 robbed the world of a mercurial genius in the sense that his gifts went beyond comprehension, his endlessly enquiring mind and imagination backed by a phenomenal command. At the same time he was in every sense an ‘angry young man’ capable of antagonising many who crossed his path. Indeed, it was those most sympathetic to his cause who suffered the whiplash of his rudeness and contempt (as Arthur Rubinstein, no less, found to his cost). And listening to this four-disc issue of his complete RCA recordings it is hard to think of him listening to playbacks (like Artur Schnabel, Myra Hess and Radu Lupu he disliked studio conditions and the recording process) and easier to think of him coming close to blows with producers anxious to curb what they saw as his wildness and excess. Blisteringly intense, though capable of sudden retreats into repose and serenity, his unique personality could engulf and ignite everything in its path. Geniuses rarely win competitions and so his third prize, coming after Vladimir Ashkenazy and John Browning at the 1956 Queen Elizabeth Competition in Brussels is perhaps understandable, though with the compensation of a superior placing to Cécile Ousset and Lazar Berman.

And so to the actual playing and a constant sense of provocation and revelation. Tchaikowsky, who was born Robert Andrzej Krauthammer, later changed to Czajowski and still later to Tchaikowsky, was for long imprisoned in the Warsaw Ghetto and narrowly escaped the Holocaust. His mother was not so lucky, perishing at Treblinka, and it is not hard to see in his volatile nature an inner turmoil reflecting his circumstances. How else to explain his way in his selection of the Chopin Preludes of his radical re-think of No 14 in E flat minor, or



Unconventional and audacious: André Tchaikowsky

perhaps I should say, ‘re-feel’, such is his idiosyncrasy. What dark and swirling glitter he achieves in No 8, what soaring rhetoric in No 24. He is better behaved, as it were, in the Barcarolle and even if you hear Dinu Lipatti – most courteous

Every gesture reminds you that Tchaikowsky was also a composer, such is the combined sense of creative and re-creative genius

of critics as well as a transcendental pianist – gently chiding Tchaikowsky for exaggeration, he would surely have been among the first to celebrate his greatness. Again, Tchaikowsky may offer a gale rather than a breeze in the central section of what was once described to me as the cornfields of Poland in the B major Mazurka, Op 56, yet again his reading is more mesmeric than arguable.

Then there is Ravel’s *Gaspard de la nuit* and an ‘Ondine’ more fiercely insistent than seductively whispered, though with a magically distant recitative before the final burst of manic laughter. His beat and chime in ‘Le gibet’ are remorseless and his ‘Scarbo’ is of a pace and brilliance that have you by the throat. Detailing may be cavalier yet you can imagine even Horowitz’s raised eye brows as he listened to music he once played to Joseph Szigeti and which that great violinist described as among the most diabolic musical experiences of his life. In Prokofiev’s *Visions Fugitives* you will not see a ‘changing play of rainbow hues’, as the composer put it at the head of the score, but an edge and diablerie that explode into life, most notably in Nos 4 and 14.

This leaves me with Tchaikowsky’s Mozart and the C major Piano Concerto, K503 where he is superbly partnered by the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Fritz Reiner. Once more his focus and energy are memorable and even when compared with recordings by Martha Argerich and, most

recently, Piotr Anderszewski his quality is unforgettable, his entirely distinctive way with Mozart’s ‘Emperor’ including his own lengthy and intricate cadenza. Again, few performances of the C minor Fantasia and Sonata (K457) make you so aware of the inseparable nature of Mozart’s operatic and instrumental inspiration. And every gesture reminds you that Tchaikowsky was also a composer, such is the combined sense of creative and re-creative genius.

The set, finely recorded, includes a sympathetic essay by Anastasia Belina and photos of Tchaikowsky, one of which captures a frightening and wild-eyed look. In conclusion, I can’t thank RCA enough for issuing this unforgettable reminder of a pianist beyond compare, one who, had he lived beyond his tragically short life, would never have compromised his nature.

THE RECORDINGS

André Tchaikowsky: The Complete RCA Collection

RCA Red Seal © ④ 8898 547014-2

BOX-SET *Roundup*

Rob Cowan launches a monthly page covering some unmissable CD bargains

To flippantly paraphrase one of history's giants, never in the field of recorded music has so much been available for so little. Which is the whole point of this new column. For example, my fiery baptism into the world of **Bruckner's** symphonies, the 'standard' cycle of Nos 1-9 that is, was DG's set with Eugen Jochum, a 12-LP 'special' that early in 1973 was available for £15.50. So, taking inflation into consideration, it's downright miraculous that Sony Classical's 11-CD set of Symphonies Nos 0-9 with the Bruckner Orchestra Linz under Dennis Russell Davies retails for less than £20 or thereabouts. Not that price is of the essence. These are exceptionally fine performances, especially No 6 where Davies negotiates the first movement's oscillating tempos with the skill of a master oarsman. Furthermore, like Michael Gielen on his SWR set (SWR Music), he opts for the first versions of the Fourth and Eighth Symphonies (1874 and 1887) which for those who are as yet unfamiliar with Bruckner's first thoughts include much music that was later discarded. I personally find both fascinating, especially the Fourth's third movement, which is quite different to the 'Hunting' Scherzo we all know and love. Following on the heels of Hans Rosbaud (see *Replay*, page 124) Davies offers an extremely fine account of the Fifth whereas the playing of the Bruckner Orchestra Linz is excellent. Davies's conducting is consistently compelling so if you're after a persuasive, digitally recorded entree into this repertoire you could hardly do better.

Writing of **Eugen Jochum** just now prompts reference to the second of DG's two sets devoted to the conductor's work. The first (479 6314, on 42 CDs), which covered the orchestral works and concertos, was released back in September 2016 and includes the Bruckner symphony cycle mentioned above whereas Vol 2 offers us Jochum's recordings, using various forces, of choral and operatic repertoire. Bruckner is again writ large, with the three Masses, key shorter works and two versions of the *Te Deum*, the earlier of the two (1950) being the more exciting. We have the Mozart Requiem twice, once with and once without the ritual trappings of a

complete mass for the dead (performed on the anniversary of Mozart's death), though the musical performances sound identical. Jochum offers romantically ethereal readings of Bach's major choral works (including both Passions and the B minor Mass), Haydn's *Creation* and *St Cecilia* Mass, as well as Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, which I found marginally less compelling. The featured operas are *Così fan tutte* (especially memorable), *Die Entführung*, *Der Freischütz*, *Lohengrin*, *Die Meistersinger* as well as Orff's complete *Trionfi* (with two versions of each of 'Carmina Burana' and 'Catulli Carmina')

Davies negotiates the first movement's oscillating tempos with the skill of a master oarsman

Nothing could be more stylistically removed from Jochum's lean, sinewy conducting style than the sumptuous productions that Herbert von Karajan drew from the Berlin Philharmonic and Orchestre de Paris for EMI in the 1970s. A fair sampling of them turns up on the three-CD set **The Sound of Herbert von Karajan**, at its most invasive at the start of Tchaikovsky's First Piano Concerto when Alexis Weissenberg brings out the big guns with Karajan and his Berliners providing a velvet-textured backdrop. Rachmaninov's Second Concerto with the same team occasionally sounds muddled when everyone is playing flat out although with artists of this calibre magical episodes are inevitable. Dvořák Symphonies Nos 8 and 9 are again weighty and supercharged (the brass positively screams at you), and I wasn't too sure about the explosive close to No 8's *Adagio* or the lush portamentos in its *allegretto*, although there is plenty that's impressive elsewhere. The Berlin

accounts of Debussy's *La mer* and *Prélude à l'après-midi d'un faune* are wonderfully evocative and although the Paris version of Ravel's *Boléro* climaxes to obliterating snare drums and *La valse's* coda slows to a virtual halt, at least initially, *Alborada del gracioso's* contrasting moods are vividly captured.

If Karajan's full-on conducting style drains your emotions then light musical relief with a virtuoso twist is on hand from Scribendum and their neat four-CD set **The Art of Leroy Anderson**, recordings made between 1952 and 1962, including the 1958 original cast recording of *Goldilocks* featuring Elaine Stritch with Lehman Engel conducting. The stereo tapes still sound exceptionally well and the mono sessions have been nicely mastered, with individual suites of carols for strings, winds and brass. The *Irish Suite* is a particular joy, opening as it does with 'The Irish Washerwoman', a gorgeous fiddle solo in 'The Last Rose of Summer' (Louis Kaufmann, perhaps?) and an ingenious version of 'The Minstrel Boy' that's plainly based on 'The Pilgrim's March' from Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*. Anderson's band is truly top-notch, *Bugler's Holiday* is superbly played and there are such well-loved perennials as *Belle of the Ball*, *Fiddle-Faddle*, *The Syncopated Clock* and many, many more. If you're a fan of Eric Coates's similarly chipper mono recordings of his own works then you'll find these irresistible. I certainly did. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

Bruckner Symphonies Nos 0-9 **Davies**
Sony Classical © 11 8898 548337-2

Eugen Jochum: Complete recordings on Deutsche Grammophon, Vol 2
DG © (38 discs) 479 8237

The Sound of Herbert von Karajan
Warner Classics © 3 9029 572090-2

The Art of Leroy Anderson
Scribendum © 4 SC811



REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings



Masters of Bruckner

In case you didn't catch them first time round, Scribendum's two **'The Art of Konwitschny'** boxes – SC504 (Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra stereo recordings, 1959–62) and SC505 (mono recordings with various orchestras, 1950–59) – have now been amalgamated into a single 20-CD set. Collectors with good memories and keen ears will gratefully recall the German conductor's stereo cycles of the Beethoven and Schumann symphonies, the former notable for its generosity when it comes to the matter of repeats. In fact, I can't recall any other 'old-style' (in other words, fairly marmoreal) *Eroica* that does include its first-movement exposition repeat. Also played are the Seventh Symphony's first-movement repeat and the repeat in the finale of the Fifth. Schumann's symphonies, plus his *Overture*,

This sounds like the Bruckner Second that Furtwängler never recorded

Scherzo and Finale, Konzertstück Op 86 and *Manfred* and *Genoveva* overtures, have an engaging solidity about them, which isn't to say that tempos are consistently leisurely. They're not: in fact, Franz Konwitschny's approach is often both affectionate and dramatic.

The Beethoven cycle is supplemented with some remarkable mono recordings, performances that with their Dionysian sweep remind us of Konwitschny's years as a Gewandhaus Orchestra viola player under Furtwängler (both conductors disliked 'the exact beat'). It's true that the 1955 *Eroica* and the 1950 Fifth lack the later versions' aforementioned repeats, but the way that the Fifth's first movement, beyond its stately opening, flies into action hardly compares with Konwitschny's more Klempererian approach later on. This is electric music-making, make no mistake. The mono Fourth Symphony is almost as good, though something weird happens at 5'48" into the *Adagio* (possibly a faulty edit). The mono *Choral* Symphony is again

more wholly awe-inspiring than its stereo successor. Try the glowing coda of the first movement (from 16'59") – the way it gains momentum, the attack of timps when the opening motif returns, or the massive *ritardando* at the end of the movement. In the finale, bass Hans Krämer declaims his 'O Freunde' recitative magnificently; and at Konwitschny's slow tempo, come his big marching solo, tenor Rolf Apreck is able to sing his heart out.

But great as these performances are – and I think they are great, especially the *Eroica*'s 'funeral march' – it's the 1951 performance of Bruckner's Second (1877 version, ed Haas) with the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra that really marks Konwitschny out as way and above the norm for his day. Conceived on the grandest scale possible, with stormy climaxes and an overpowering depth of tone, this abundantly lyrical performance sounds like the Bruckner Second that Furtwängler never recorded. It is in my view among the most remarkable recordings that this work has ever had, and on its own well worth the set's modest asking price. The more familiar (Supraphon) Czech Philharmonic version of the Fourth is notably transparent while the stereo Leipzig Fifth, a reading notable for its architectural good sense, concludes with a monumental account of the finale, the closing minutes massive in their impact. Also included are a broadly stated Mendelssohn *Scottish* Symphony, an often impressive Brahms's First, viscerally exciting accounts of Shostakovich's Tenth and Eleventh, monumental statements of Beethoven's *Grosse fuge* and Mozart's *Adagio and fugue* and various Beethoven overtures.

Any release featuring **Hans Rosbaud** has to be an event worth celebrating but a collection of Bruckner symphonies Nos 2–9 on SWR Classic is of special significance. As far as I can ascertain only the Sixth and Ninth symphony performances are entirely new to CD, with the Fourth a comparative rarity (only one other CD edition is listed) and the Seventh, by far the most familiar –

though there are two performances listed in John F Berky's Bruckner discography at abruckner.com/discography (December 27 and 30) with no distinction as to which one is which. Some are in stereo, including versions previously available on Vox.

A small point in the context of performances that are remarkable for their drama, sincerity, cogency, and total lack of affectation. Not for Rosbaud double-glazed 'cathedrals in sound', but forthright, clear-sighted representation based on the principles of symphonic argument, which allows the slow movement of the Sixth to cry from the heart (inner string lines are especially expressive) and the Eighth's *Adagio* to rise fearlessly to an overwhelming climax. Note too the speed of the Scherzo's trio, swift and agile with no chance to meander, which is a danger under so many other conductors. The rhythmic impetus that underlies the Third Symphony's first movement – especially the opening and closing pages – is well projected and if you want to sample Rosbaud's ear for textural clarity try the opening of the Fourth's Scherzo. That cogency I referred to is at its most telling in the Fifth Symphony, especially in the finale (the double fugue quite different to Konwitschny's but just as effective) and in the Ninth the solemn march towards the *Adagio*'s screaming climactic chord could hardly be more heart-wrenching. The SWR responds faithfully to Rosbaud's musical demands, showing a deep understanding of what he was about, and offers a series of performances that is above all profoundly consistent.

THE RECORDINGS



'The Art of Konwitschny'
Scribendum © (20 discs)
SC809



Bruckner Symphonies Nos 2-9
Southwest German RSO/
Rosbaud
SWR Classic © ® SWR19043CD

Rediscovering Sanderling

Unlike Konwitschny, Kurt Sanderling's presence on the British musical scene extended to many live performances, principally with the Philharmonia. Hänssler Profil's 'Kurt Sanderling Edition' covers the years 1948 to 1963 and involves the Leningrad Philharmonic, the USSR Radio Symphony, Vienna Symphony and Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra. There are jewels and curios galore, Maria Yudina's account of Beethoven's Fourth Concerto being both at the same time, principally because of the presence of Brahms's massive first-movement cadenza, an extravagant foray into the musical future, magisterially played, that quite transforms the nature of the piece. Yudina is equally forceful in Bach's First Concerto whereas it falls to Maria Grinberg's commanding presence to make sizeable music of Beethoven's First and Third Concertos. There are two versions of Brahms's own Second Piano Concerto, one by Sviatoslav Richter from 1951, which is both propulsive and impulsive, and the other Yakov Zak from 1949, the first movement broader than Richter's by over a minute, a craggy, thunderous rendition, profoundly Brahmsian in tone and musical approach. I loved it. Zak is equally impressive in Prokofiev's Second Piano Concerto (1959) whereas Richter returns on imperious form with Beethoven's First and Third Concertos (1963 and 1952), the *Choral Fantasy* (1952), the B flat Rondo WoO 6 (1962) and Schumann's *Introduction and Allegro Appassionato* (1951). Emil Gilels offers us all five Beethoven concertos (1957-8), rather softer-grained than Richter's but no less engaging, and there's a striking if poorly recorded account of Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand (1952), granitic, relentless and delicate where needs be. As to the violin, Leonid Kogan is on masterly form in Mozart's Third Concerto (1959) and David Oistrakh offers two especially fine performances, Szymanowski's First Concerto and Taneyev's Concert Suite (both from 1960). There's more of course, all captured in sound quality that, whether 'live' or 'studio', ranges from tolerable to perfectly acceptable, and never less than up to the task of reporting some remarkable performances.

THE RECORDING



'Kurt Sanderling Edition'
Hänssler Profil © 13 PH17018

Alexander Borovsky

Two of the few vinyl sets that I still treasure feature recordings from the 1950s of Bach's *English and French Suites* with the pianist Alexander Borovsky. I bought these years ago from 'Discurio' in London's Shepherd's Market where the proprietor described the playing as having a Rubinstein-like ease of manner and warmth of tone. And he wasn't wrong: here was Bach playing where elegance, tasteful phrasing and unforced liveliness guaranteed hours of pleasure. So imagine my delight when Borovsky-pupil William Jones announced the discovery and organised the CD release of a complete *Well-tempered Clavier* that his teacher taped in 1955, a veritable *vade mecum* that serves as a trusty guide to the musical essence of these timeless pieces. Jones's four-CD set includes Borovsky's own extensive notes on the music and the blog alexanderkborovsky.blogspot.co.uk will offer you a dazzlingly comprehensive introduction to the man, his life, career and ideas. Borovsky won the Anton Rubinstein competition in 1912 and thereafter his appearances were showered with plaudits. He left Russia after the October Revolution, started touring in Europe and eventually made his American debut in Carnegie Hall in 1923. Borovsky became a US national in 1941 and a professor at Boston University in 1956. Aside from his frequent concerts in Europe he appeared as soloist in more than 30 concertos with the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Koussevitzky. His recordings include the first 15 of Liszt's *Hungarian Rhapsodies* and other Bach works (reissued as a two-CD set by Pearl). But this 48 is perhaps Borovsky's crowning achievement on disc, albeit posthumous, with utterly natural playing that can parade a melting legato, a tiptoeing staccato, subtle but often striking badinage among inner voices, considerable freedom in respect to tempo and the way chords are chimed (sometimes subtly desynchronized) and a welcome absence of percussive 'banging'. Just try the gently arpeggiated chords in the fourth Prelude from Book One, the easeful rubato, or the commanding opening of the Second Book's first Prelude, the Fugue positively pre-Gouldian in its keenness of attack. But what impresses more than anything is the sense that Borovsky's Bach-playing is an act of joyful homage, something he simply *had* to do at that particular moment. Among the set's vintage piano rivals I would rate Borovsky alongside Edwin Fischer, Rosalyn Tureck, Jorg Demus, Glenn Gould and Walter Gieseking, while the transfers are

generally first-rate. I would be surprised if listening to this set doesn't prove something of a revelation.

THE RECORDING



Bach Well-tempered Clavier
Books One and Two
Borovsky
available from:
alexanderkborovsky.blogspot.co.uk

blogspot.co.uk

Commemorating Ferras

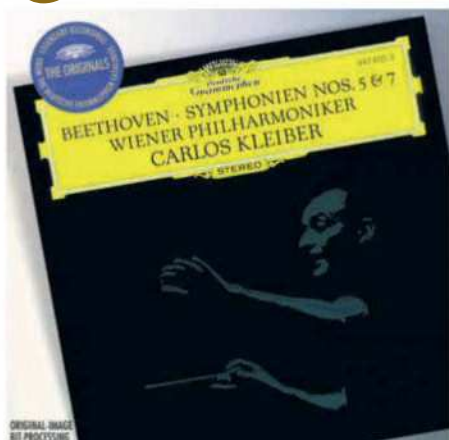
First came 'L'Art de Christian Ferras' (DG/Discovery 480 6655) though much of the duo-sonata repertoire included there with pianist Pierre Barbizet had already appeared as part of a three-CD set on Brilliant Classics. Now Warner Classics are celebrating Ferras with their own Icon set, the partnership with Barbizet especially strong in a complete cycle of Beethoven violin sonatas where the *Spring* Sonata is repeated (an earlier Teldec version from 1953). Aside from his seductively sweet tone – very much along the lines of Ferras's teacher Enescu – the main properties of Ferras's style are a keen musical intelligence and an alertness to what's going on around him though in the case of Beethoven's Violin Concerto I much prefer the version with Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic (DG) to the rather foursquare rendition under Sargent included in the current set. In Mozart's Fifth Violin Concerto under André Vandernoot (the Fourth is also included) there's an alarming problem with the sound. Listen at one minute into the slow movement of the D major work and it sounds for all the world as if a whistling ondes martinot is playing alongside Ferras and the orchestra. Elsewhere the sound is pretty good, certainly in the Berg concert under Georges Prêtre where at the point where the Bach chorale enters after one of the score's nastiest episodes (c7'00"), the inward quality of Ferras's playing is remarkably moving. Add key sonatas by Franck, Fauré (both sonatas), Brahms (Third Sonata) and Debussy, and concertos by Tchaikovsky, Mendelssohn, Bruch (First Concerto) and Lalo (the four-movement version of the *Symphonie espagnole*), and you have a musically nourishing collection featuring a truly great violinist.

THE RECORDING



Christian Ferras
The Complete HMV &
Telefunken Recordings
Warner Classics © 13
9029 576308-4

Classics RECONSIDERED



Andrew Farach-Colton and **David Gutman** lock horns over the pros and cons of Kleiber's recording of Beethoven's Seventh with the Vienna Philharmonic



Beethoven

Symphony No 7

Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra / Carlos Kleiber
DG

Kleiber's Seventh Symphony is much more obviously controversial than his Fifth, destined, I suspect, to divide opinion on both sides of the Channel. As an interpretation it is closely modelled on his father's fine reading. (There is even the same controversial pizzicato end to the *Allegretto*, rather limply done here.) In general style and voltage, though, the performance emulates the classic Toscanini set of 1936.

Not an ounce of excess tone is left on the Vienna Philharmonic sound. Gone is the distinctive, middle-European texturing of Schmidt-Isserstedt's beautifully played (and superbly grammatical) Decca reading. Even the recording seems self-consciously spare and monochromatic. The finale, admittedly, is a *tour de force*. Only one thing strikes me as being incongruous here and that is Kleiber's odd slackening of the tension whenever the woodwinds pick up the skipping second subject. The Scherzo is also extremely compelling, the whole thing taken very quickly though with a slowish Trio,

unnuanced in the violin line (as marked), which makes Kleiber's reading considerably less expressive at this point than either Toscanini's or Erich Kleiber's. But then how lyrical should the Seventh be? It is, as Kleiber rightly divines, a spare, athletic work; but is it not vibrant too, a partially lyrical celebration of the spirit of Dionysus? ... This is a Seventh to be acquired and argued over. You may not find it wholly agreeable, or wholly convincing, but it does at times bring us unnervingly close to the essential spirit of this great work, a rare enough phenomenon in all conscience. **Richard Osborne (9/76)**

Andrew Farach-Colton Richard Osborne was quite bowled over by Carlos Kleiber's DG recording of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony (6/75) – and rightly so. Indeed, David, you and I defended RO's assessment and the recording's now-legendary status in this very magazine back in April 2005, while Rob Cowan voiced reservations. Now, *sans* Rob, we're reappraising Kleiber's account of the Seventh. RO was considerably less enthused with this recording, and again I find myself in agreement. I admire the energy and muscularity of Kleiber's interpretation, certainly, but it's oddly monumental. Hans Schmidt-Isserstedt's (referenced by RO) is slower and grander, while teeming with incident and character. The way Kleiber plays it, the first movement *Vivace* might as well be *Allegro*. Isn't *vivace* as much an indication of mood as of tempo?

David Gutman Where to start? That's not quite the opening salvo I expected, and I can't go along with such a downbeat assessment. I sense the shock of the 'new' behind some of RO's responses (period performance came later). I suspect too

that some of his reservations – and maybe yours – derive from the oddly focused (multimiked but rather 'dusty') sonics of the original recording: RO seemed more enthusiastic about the CD release in tandem with that indubitably iconic Fifth (5/95). If I have problems marshalling my own thoughts, it's because the waters have been muddled by the arrival of so many competing Kleiber versions, some 'pirated'. The Seventh remained a speciality to the very end, the last work this reluctant maestro programmed officially – though not quite the last piece he conducted. Perhaps you prefer his Concertgebouw DVD?

AF-C Well, first off, I agree about the 'dusty' sound quality. I've been listening via the 1995 DG Originals remastering you just mentioned, and even that is strikingly colourless, as if the engineers intended it to be heard on AM radio.

DG More recent high-end revamps on SACD and Blu-ray have continued to freshen the sound. I'm guessing that the CD layer of my SACD sounds better than the incarnation you've got there, refining

to some degree the 'spare, athletic' qualities RO talked about in 1976.

AF-C I'm sure you're right, David. But does this sonic refinement significantly illuminate the interpretation? I rather doubt it. I'm also doubtful that RO's reaction reflected a 'shock of the new'. Even in 1976, Kleiber's interpretation was not so unorthodox. RO notes that its streamlined athleticism is 'closely modelled' on the Decca recording by Kleiber's father, Erich, as well as Toscanini's magnificent 1936 account for RCA. And, of course, Toscanini's recording *was* intended for AM broadcast, yet conveys abundant joy and wonder – so engineering isn't the issue. The sound on Kleiber's Concertgebouw DVD is also lacklustre, but that performance is more emotionally involving, and so is his performance with the Bavarian State Orchestra on Orfeo. I love how, with the Bavarians, Kleiber explodes out of that first *fortissimo* fermata in the *Vivace*, as if he's impatient to dive back in; with the VPO it sounds routine.

DG I don't hear the DG version as remotely routine but I can just about see what you're



One of two Beethoven symphony recordings made in Vienna for DG, both worthy of classic status

getting at. Kleiber takes the long view. The main body of his first movement becomes an exercise in militantly maintained rhythm rather than Wagner's dance apotheosis, so other readings may offer more incidental pleasures. And his not-so-slow movement (with elements plainly inherited from Erich Kleiber) feels deliberately bleak and abstracted. But doesn't that throw the excitement of the scherzo and finale into greater relief? I haven't heard anything from Erich that generates comparable momentum. I'd also contend that the combination of a stripped-down string sound with antiphonally placed violins was indeed unusual, possibly unique for the period. The recording is (just over) 40 years old now – as old as Toscanini's would have been then. Taking the first movement exposition repeat was scarcely the norm either. The Amsterdam DVD makes compromises on all those points.

AF-C I'll take emotional involvement over textual completeness, but I think I know what you mean when you say Kleiber takes 'the long view'. In the *Allegretto*, for example, I sense he's aiming for a kind of noble stoicism – acknowledging there's pain in the music while keeping it at arm's

length. It still doesn't move me. I rather like certain details: how he surreptitiously slips into the proto-Schubertian *maggiore* section at 2'56", for example. Even here, though, the *dolce* markings for the woodwind are paid short shrift, and there's insufficient respite from the rhythmic and psychic relentlessness of the opening. I'd argue that the 'militantly maintained rhythm' you hear in the first movement is really an *idée fixe* throughout the entire work. Yes, the third movement is played as a true *Presto*, but it's driven so hard that it's not so much exciting as harrowing.

DG No performance is beyond criticism and Kleiber certainly doesn't prioritise charm. Were you bothered by the scrunched treatment of the grace notes in the *Allegretto*? I would certainly query the final bars where, like his father before him, and like Klemperer, Kleiber insists on pizzicato strings to the very end. I'd have been happier with the traditional bowed reading plus apocryphal *ritardando*. But then Kleiber is not trying to make us comfortable, ending rather in mid-air. In the scherzo the quality of articulation and range of dynamic he gets from an ensemble inclined to coast seem to me pretty remarkable. I love that splenetic

quality. If anything, it's the old-fashioned breadth of the trio that has me puzzled. Toscanini was far more innovative and 'modern' in his refusal to linger. Kleiber's DVD version is fleetier, too.

AF-C Those scrunched grace notes in the *Allegretto* do bother me, yes; they're more twitches than lyrical emphases. And I also don't care for the pizzicato ending with the strings tiptoeing off into the dark night. It's so clearly *not* what Beethoven wanted or he wouldn't have written *forte* in their last bar. I find Kleiber's doggedness most convincing in the finale. Ideally, I'd like more *chiaroscuro* and playfulness, but it's compelling nonetheless – and the coda's euphonious roar is absolutely exhilarating.

DG I don't think anyone since Toscanini has so successfully conveyed that sense of elation. Acceleration can come across as a loss of control but here nothing is gabbled, not even the horns. It's this combination of control and abandon that works for so many. Maybe not for you, though?

AF-C Coming back to this performance after many years, I was surprised by how little it delighted me. It is a 'classic', but perhaps its reputation has been enhanced by its coupling? Kleiber's performance of the Fifth is stupendous; talk about balancing control and abandon – his Fifth is at once thrilling and monumental. He takes a similar approach to the Seventh, but this work demands something different. Kleiber gets closer to the music's essence in his concert recordings, despite the overlooked repeats and relative lack of orchestral polish.

DG Well, you're not alone in having doubts. When in 1981 Kleiber led LSO renditions in London and Milan, British commentators were mostly hostile. Writing in *The Guardian*, *Gramophone*'s Edward Greenfield skewered the 'aggressive exaggerations and idiosyncrasies' of 'a conductor determined at all costs to do things differently'. Kleiber, mortified, made the BBC wipe its tape and never directed another orchestral concert in the UK. Personally, I'd not want to be without Bernstein – repeat friendly as early as 1964. His New Yorkers are less poised and transparent than Kleiber's Viennese, the tonal conflicts dramatised and humour broader as befits a performance cued from a score on which Bernstein had scrawled 'The Surprise Symphony'. I'm sure we can agree that blandness is the enemy of great Beethoven. And Carlos Kleiber, differently egocentric, is certainly never that. For me, his DG Seventh is as 'classic' – and 'Classical' – as they come! **G**

Books



Richard Bratby reads a monograph on Beethoven's cello sonatas:

'These five experimental works resemble a series of geological samples from crucial points in Beethoven's creative development'



Patrick Rucker on an illuminating study of Liszt's symphonic poems:

'The more we learn about Weimar's less than ideal conditions, Liszt's tenacity seems all the more remarkable'

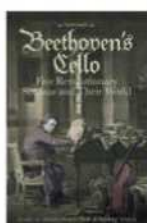
Beethoven's Cello

Five Revolutionary Sonatas and Their World

By Marc D Moskowitz and R Larry Todd

Boydell Press, HB, 274pp, £29.95

ISBN 978-1-7832-7237-2



Beethoven's cello sonatas Op 102 (or, as he termed them, sonatas for piano and cello) baffled his

contemporaries. 'These two sonatas are surely amongst the most remarkable and strange piano works written in a long time, not only in this form but altogether for the pianoforte', wrote the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung* in 1818. 'Everything here is different, very different from what we have received up to now, even from this master.' A generation later, in 1854, they were still scratching their heads. Beethoven's Russian-born biographer Wilhelm von Lenz dismissed Op 102 No 2's final fugue as 'unplayable – it is a perfect scarecrow'.

So it's not just me, then. Most of us carry the scars of at least one unhappy musical encounter in our youth. As a teenage cellist, mine was an unsuccessful assault on the five Beethoven sonatas, naively (though unavoidably) attempted without a piano. One of the many incidental insights of this new book by the cellist and scholar Marc D Moskowitz and the pianist (and Mendelssohn biographer) R Larry Todd is that the virtuoso cellists of the 19th century tended to avoid the Beethoven sonatas. Instead, it took pianists like Henry Litolf and Hans von Bülow to propel them into the repertoire. 'It is not enough to have a good cellist – the situation also demands a refined individual', noted Bülow, to which I can only nod in rueful agreement.

And yet as a cycle these five experimental works – no two alike in style or form – resemble a series of geological samples from crucial points in Beethoven's creative development. The two Op 5 sonatas (1796) embody the extrovert young pianist-

composer, dazzling the court of the cello-playing King Frederick William II of Prussia. The expansive Op 69, written in 1808, represents the master at the peak of his symphonic game. And then there's that final pair, Op 102 (1817), two profoundly imaginative and sophisticated explorations in texture and musical form in which, as Steven Isserlis points out in his Foreword, 'we are ushered into another sphere entirely: the mystical, radiant, uncharted world of late Beethoven'. That 'scarecrow' fugue? It was 'in effect, Beethoven's prototype for the final visions of his transcendent late style', write Moskowitz and Todd: a powerful claim for a still-undervalued work.

That's their main argument, and they approach it with a thoroughness worthy of an academic thesis. They go far beyond the five numbered sonatas to consider practically everything that Beethoven wrote for solo cello. There are chapters devoted to the sets of variations for cello and piano (with a useful reminder that, contrary to modern fashion, Beethoven rated Handel above Bach), to the cello transcriptions of the Horn Sonata and the Op 3 Trio, and to the Triple Concerto (a cello concerto manqué): even the short cello solos in Beethoven's choral works get attention.

Each piece receives an in-depth analysis. Clearly and perceptively written, and illustrated with music examples and diagrams, these will probably prove of most interest to scholars. When Moskowitz and Todd argue that the dotted rhythms in the slow introduction of Op 5 No 1 signify 'an elevated, typically "royal" type of music' they don't expect you to take it on trust. Half a page of examples follows. But the historical context is endlessly fascinating. Personalities such as the cellists Duport and Linke, and Beethoven's various patrons, are vividly sketched (who knew that Prince Lichnowsky was such a notorious rake?) and there are entire chapters devoted to the cellos and pianos that Beethoven actually owned – especially relevant to music whose most

revolutionary aspect is its attempt to place two performers on truly equal terms.

The authors are less surefooted when they move away from the musical world, and there are a couple of howlers: the Jacobites were not defeated by the 'Duke of Culloden', and Anna Maria von Erdődy was not Romanian in any historically meaningful sense. A pity, because Moskowitz and Todd have an eye for an anecdote. Many of the juiciest are tucked away in the footnotes (the rumour, current in the 1820s, that Beethoven was the illegitimate son of the King of Prussia, was new to me). But taken overall, it's hard to envision a more comprehensive single-volume introduction to Beethoven and the cello, and performers, listeners and researchers will all find something to engage them here, even if the different perspectives don't always blend entirely comfortably. What's clear throughout is that Moskowitz and Todd genuinely love this music, and send you back to it with renewed enthusiasm: 'a voyage', they conclude, 'for the mind, the soul, and the human spirit'. **Richard Bratby**

Liszt and the Symphonic Poem

By Joanne Cormac

Cambridge University Press, HB, 378pp, £90

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As he approached his 36th birthday, Liszt surprised musical Europe by declaring the end of his

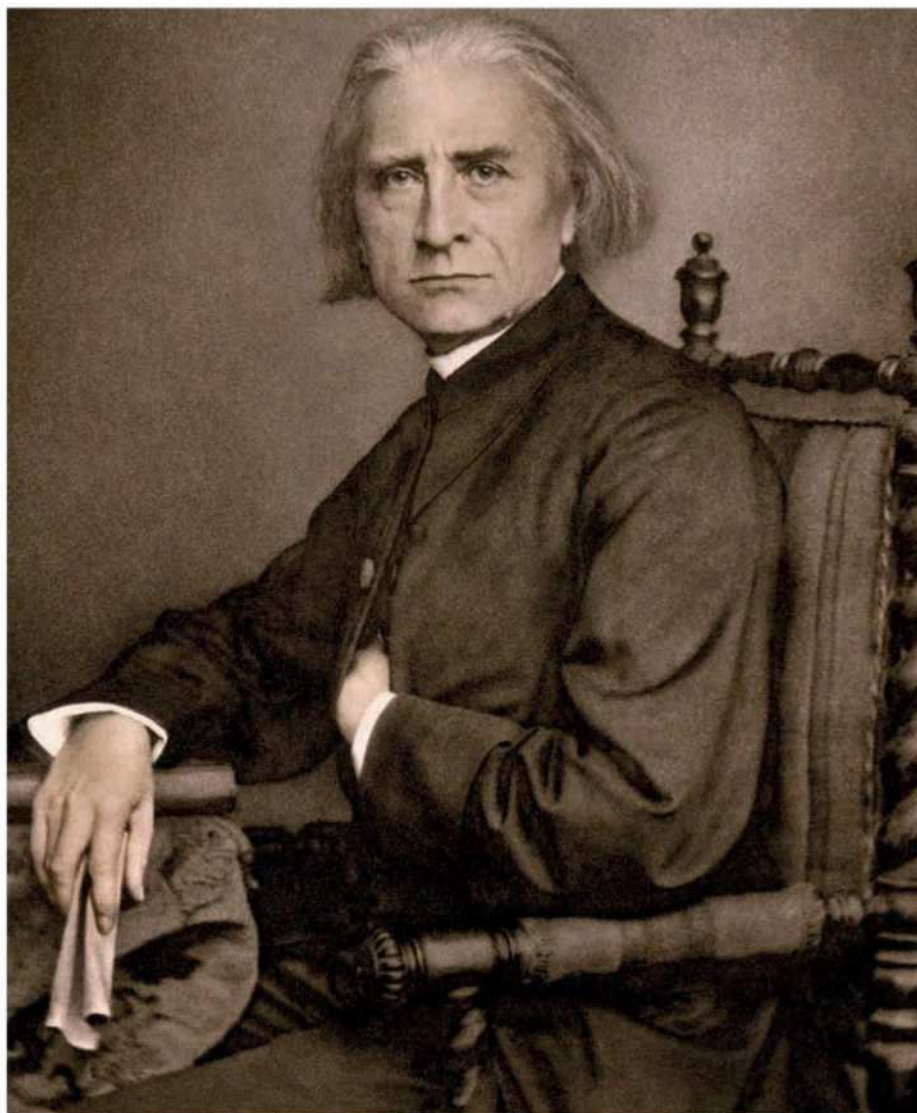
public career as a pianist following a recital in Ukraine. Few could have guessed the direction his career would take over the next dozen years. Accepting a longstanding invitation from the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar, Liszt settled in the little town, took up the baton in earnest and started to transform his new home into a hub of modern music. He presented premieres and important revivals, most notably works by Berlioz, Schumann and Wagner, both

at court concerts and in the theatre. Along the way, Liszt himself emerged as one of the most influential orchestral composers of the 1850s, with works like the two symphonies, the Lenau Episodes, the first two Funeral Odes, a number of occasional pieces and transcriptions, and the first 12 symphonic poems. But if Liszt's achievements in Weimar are well documented, what Weimar provided him in terms of artistic stimuli and challenges is less understood.

Enter Joanne Cormac of the University of Nottingham. She contends that studies in recent decades have largely focused on demonstrating Liszt's continuity with the Beethovenian symphonic tradition. Meanwhile, his more radical innovations and reforms as both conductor and composer, often shaped by direct experience in the Weimar theatre, have been neglected. Cormac sets out to address this imbalance by mapping the symphonic poems against Liszt's own evolving artistic aims, his response to circumstances specific to Weimar, and the prevalent theatrical mores in mid-19th-century Germany. The result is a richly detailed interdisciplinary study that provides context for the symphonic poems' evolution, as well as a synthesis of Liszt's multifarious activities between February 1848 and August 1861.

At the Weimar court theatre Liszt encountered the first long-term professional theatrical milieu of his career. Despite his closeness to the Grand Ducal family, he was expected to function within the theatre's administrative structure. As 'Kapellmeister', Liszt was co-equal to the theatre's Artistic Director, who had responsibility for spoken drama and other non-musical activities. Both positions reported to the theatre Intendant, or General Director, who in turn was responsible to the court.

Opera, concerts and drama all used the same orchestra and most performances, save the occasional concert at the Grand Ducal palace or the Town Hall, were held in Weimar's only theatre. Because the theatre was entirely underwritten by the court, competition for scant resources was fierce. Liszt worked under a series of Intendants. One of them, Baron Ziegesar, proved a sympathetic and energetic colleague, working closely with Liszt on the productions of *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*. Another, Franz Dingelstedt, who actually obtained his position through Liszt's influence, organised the claque which disrupted the 1858 premiere of Peter Cornelius's *Barber of Bagdad* and provoked Liszt's resignation. Though Liszt removed himself from the theatre



Liszt emerged as an influential orchestral composer in the 1850s with his series of symphonic poems

after the *Barber* demonstration, he continued to conduct concerts at court until the summer of 1861, when he left for Rome.

The more we learn about Weimar's less than ideal conditions, Liszt's tenacity seems all the more remarkable. Cormac points out his innovations as a conductor, most obviously in shaping the canon by the works he chose to produce. But he also improved standards of performance through the careful preparation of singers in piano rehearsals and by insisting on sectional rehearsals for the orchestra, both novelties at the time. And he was motivated to present performances that would, so far as possible, realise the wishes of the composer. This is evident not only in his correspondence with the exiled Wagner, but with Berlioz and Schumann as well.

If the ideas for a number of the first 12 symphonic poems long pre-date Liszt's arrival in Weimar, they all attained their

definitive form there. Cormac traces the often complex genesis of each before focusing on five with the closest connections to the Weimar theatre: *Tasso*, *Prometheus*, *Orpheus*, *Festklänge* and *Hamlet*. Incidentally, she challenges several longstanding assumptions, among them the idea *Festklänge* was conceived in anticipation of Liszt's marriage to Carolyn zu Sayn-Wittgenstein and that *Hamlet* was inspired by seeing Bogumil Dawison in the role. More importantly, Cormac demonstrates that, despite Liszt's use of sonata procedures in many of the pieces, as he progressed through the series his move away from sonata form was considered and deliberate.

The trenchant scholarship of *Liszt and the Symphonic Poem* is leavened with 77 music examples, reproductions of playbills and 11 helpful tables that detail, among other things, the evolution of individual symphonic poems as well as formal analyses. **Patrick Rucker**

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Handel's Saul

This oratorio is rich in characterisation, psychological insight and colour, but the fact that it is often subjected to gratuitous alterations makes its recorded history somewhat chequered, finds **Richard Wigmore**

While Handel's operatic fortunes were faltering, the biblical oratorios *Deborah* and *Athalia*, premiered in 1733, seemed to point the way forward. But the composer was not so easily weaned from the London stage. The tide only began to turn after the failure of *Serse* at the King's Theatre early in 1738. For the following season Handel kept his options open, creating two oratorios, *Saul* and *Israel in Egypt*, and drafting a new opera, *Imeneo*, the penultimate work in a genre he would abandon in 1741. Although the future looked uncertain, Handel's creative energy and sheer willpower remained as indomitable as ever.

Saul was Handel's first collaboration with the prickly, eccentric Leicestershire squire Charles Jennens, future compiler of the text of *Messiah*. The Old Testament story of David's victory over Goliath and Saul's madness was popular in the 17th and 18th centuries, and once he had resolved to set Jennens's libretto, skilfully compiled from the book of Samuel and Abraham Cowley's unfinished epic *Davideis*, Handel threw himself into the project with wholehearted, even reckless, enthusiasm. From the outset he planned a work on the grandest possible scale, with the largest orchestra yet heard in a London theatre. After visiting Handel in September 1738, Jennens wrote to a cousin: 'Mr Handel's head is more full of maggots than ever. I found yesterday in his room a very queer instrument which he calls carillon ... 'Tis played with keys like a Harpsichord and with this Cyclopean instrument he designs to make poor Saul stark mad.'

The carillon, unfurled in the Act 1 Sinfonia before the women's chorus of welcome, was not the only 'maggot'. Jennens also noted, with faint disapproval, Handel's purchase of 'an organ of £500 price which (because he is overstock'd with Money) he has bespoke of one Moss of Barnet'. The custom-built instrument has a starring role at several points in *Saul*, whose lavish instrumentation also includes flutes, oboes, bassoons, two trumpets, three trombones (novelties in London), harp, theorbo and a second organ, plus a pair of giant military kettledrums – which Handel borrowed from the Tower of London.

PREMIERE AND RECEPTION

On its premiere at the King's Theatre on January 16, 1739, *Saul* was 'met with general Applause by a numerous and splendid Audience' (*London Daily Post*). As well it might have been. With its Shakespearean variety of character and incident, psychological insight and opulence of orchestral colouring, the oratorio is one of Handel's supreme achievements. Although Saul himself has no full-blown aria, his outsize, brooding presence, culminating in his terrible final lucidity at Endor, gives the work a tragic power Handel never surpassed. Counterpointing Saul's decline, with its echoes of Othello and Lear, is the rise of the young man of the people, David, a role taken in 1739 by a countertenor (or possibly tenor) by the name of Russell (his first name remains unknown).

Beyond its explorations of friendship, the romantic love between David and Saul's younger daughter, Michal, and, above all,

the corrosive power of jealousy, *Saul* also enshrines personal concerns of Jennens, a devout Protestant but also a Nonjuror loyal to the deposed Stuarts. Saul, the Lord's anointed, had disobeyed God when he spared 'the curst Amalekite'. His replacement by David, unimpeachably virtuous yet not in the direct line of succession, was theologically necessary and crucial for the survival of the nation. For contemporary audiences, Saul's fate would have resonated with that of the deposed Catholic James II half a century earlier.





'Saul versus David': a painting from 1646 by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, known as Guercino (1591-1666):

EARLY RECORDINGS

For revivals of *Saul*, Handel cut, rewrote and transposed arias to match the forces at his disposal. The part of David was at various times taken by voices ranging from sopranos to the bass William Savage, and was even shared between two singers. After the first run of his oratorios, Handel could be cavalier over dramatic coherence. But that's no reason for us to accept wholesale cuts, as in the earliest version of *Saul* on disc, stodgily conducted by **Mogens Wöldike** in the early 1960s.

Although it now sounds its age, the virtually complete recording from Sir **Charles Mackerras**, based on a 1972 Leeds Festival performance, has far more to commend it. Tempos that seemed lively enough nearly half a century ago can now sound stately, with heavily weighted orchestral bass lines. The large amateur chorus is lusty but unwieldy, the soloists good, if stylistically variable. Margaret Price, gorgeous of tone as Saul's elder daughter, Merab, is statuesque and word-shy. Donald McIntyre, a dark,

Wagnerian bass-baritone, makes an imposing Saul, and James Bowman is a full-voiced David, moving in the Elegy for Saul and Jonathan. Best of all is Sheila Armstrong, dulcet in 'Fell rage and black despair' and confirming Michal's new-found spiritual strength in 'No, no, let the guilty tremble'.

Provisos apart, Mackerras has a stronger feel for Saul's dramatic architecture than does Sir **Philip Ledger** on a recording made in King's College Chapel, Cambridge. Evidently, 1979-80 was not a vintage year



Barrie Kosky's 'violently excessive, Hogarth-meets-Shakespeare take' on Saul, with Christopher Purves 'vocally and visually mesmerising' in the title-role

for the King's boys. The altos are weak, the trebles unblended. Ledger's direction is competent but bland (rarely can Handel's evocation of the 'monster atheist' Goliath have sounded more decorous). Even when tempos seem right, there is no lift to the rhythms. Redemption comes from the soloists, above all Paul Esswood's liquid-toned David and Thomas Allen's Saul, profoundly moving in the Endor scene.

FIRST PERIOD RECORDINGS

You could never accuse

Nikolaus Harnoncourt of under-characterisation. His is the earliest period-instrument *Saul*, recorded at a concert in Vienna's Musikvereinsaal in 1985. But right from the overture, this performance is hamstrung by cuts, most grievously in 'O fatal consequence of rage', the chorus of appalled Israelites that closes Act 2. Harnoncourt's direction is typically idiosyncratic. 'Envy, eldest born of hell', where the chorus become

moral commentators in a Greek-style drama, is eccentrically fast and flustered. Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau's mastery of colour brings dividends in the Endor scene; elsewhere, he tends to bark and jab. The fiery Julia Varady never lets you forget that Merab is of royal blood, though her words are barely decipherable, and Elizabeth Gale's appealing Michal sounds too fluttery to 21st-century ears. The finest singing comes from two seasoned Handeliens: Esswood, again, as David, and Anthony Rolfe Johnson, both mellifluous and virile as Jonathan.

On Sir **John Eliot Gardiner's** recording from the Göttingen International Handel Festival in 1989, his Monteverdi Choir outstrips all the competition to date in precision, virtuosity and dynamic range. With crisp, vital playing from the English Baroque Soloists, *Saul* emerges as an unstaged opera, whether in the sisterly spats in Act 1 or the scene between Jonathan and the deranged Saul, culminating in the hushed,

traumatised reaction of the populace in 'O fatal consequence of rage'. Gardiner feels the dance rhythms underlying many of the arias, and builds each of the great choruses magnificently (the 'Envy' chorus distils an Aeschylean *terribilità*). Derek Lee Ragin tends to fuss at David's music, but the other singers are superb: the teak-voiced Alastair Miles as the tormented king (immaculate in the coloratura of 'A serpent, in my bosom warm'd'), Lynne Dawson radiant yet mettlesome as Michal, and John Mark Ainsley, youthful of tone, graceful in phrasing, as Jonathan.

MADE IN GERMANY

Nearly a decade later, Naxos brought out an absolutely complete *Saul* conducted by **Joachim Carlos Martini** which even includes, uniquely, two numbers that Handel suppressed: David's jaunty 'Fly, fly, malicious spirit, fly' and Abner's jolly aria just before the final chorus. Martini directs a neat, stylistically aware performance, with

A CLOSE-RUN THING

Gabrieli Consort and Players / McCreesh

Archiv     474 510-2AH3

With classy choral singing and superb soloists, including Andreas Scholl at his



most dulcet, this is self-recommending, though McCreesh favours briskness over tragic weight in the great framing choruses of Act 2.

CONTINENTAL CHOICE

RIAS Chamber Choir, Concerto Köln / Jacobs

Harmonia Mundi     HMY292 1877/8

If you can accept Jacobs's trademark idiosyncracies, among them a hyperactive



continuo and Frenchified cadences, this is a *Saul* of thrilling theatricality, with each singer urgently 'living' his or her role.

DVD CHOICE

Glyndebourne Chorus, OAE / Bolton

Opus Arte   DVD OA1216D

Don't be looking to the Bolton-Kosky



Glyndebourne collaboration for stylistic elegance. But Christopher Purves gives yet another towering performance in a production fusing riotous extravagance with profound psychological truth.

assured contributions from the chorus and small – arguably too small – period orchestra. But the monastery acoustic envelops the choral lines in an aural fog. Barbara Schlick, with her distinctive bittersweet tone as Michal, and Claron McFadden, superbly haughty in Merab's first two arias, are excellent, the men good (David Cordier's firmly sung David) to just about adequate. Stephan MacLeod, as Saul, has a plaintive quaver in his tone, and sings the least threatening 'A serpent' on disc.

A resonant ecclesiastical acoustic afflicts another 1997 'live' recording, also made in Germany, directed by **Peter Neumann**. The chorus (with notably fresh-toned sopranos) sounds dramatically involved, and Neumann paces the work sensibly. The pronunciation of the largely German cast can be speculative, though that wouldn't have worried Handel. Simone Kermes, always a soprano with attitude, tears into Merab's 'What abject thoughts a prince can have'. Vasiljka Jezovšek's pure-toned Michal is especially moving in the Elegy. As Saul, Gregory Reinhart can be rough, but he has the right bass depth for the role, and powerfully inhabits the king's fury and despair. The weak link in an otherwise worthwhile performance is countertenor Matthias Koch's dry, hooty David.

A recording made at concerts in Maulbronn Monastery, Baden-Württemberg in 2002 has some fine soloists, including Stephen Varcoe as a lyrical, very human Saul, and Laurie Raviol and the chaste-toned Nancy Argenta as the sisters. Michael Chance's David is too languid for my taste, with 'O Lord, whose mercies numberless' emerging as a reverie rather than a fervent prayer. **Jürgen Budday** directs his youthful-sounding choir and small (again, arguably too small) period band with fair style, though in his evident determination to avoid ponderousness his performance too often seems lightweight. You would never guess the momentous issues at stake in 'Envy' or in the too-easily flowing final chorus of Act 2. Other drawbacks include several cuts and a skimpy booklet-note in German only.

Any performance of *Saul* that excises Michal's 'In sweetest harmony they lived', as **Helmuth Rilling's** does in 2007, has to be a non-starter. There are damaging cuts elsewhere, too, plus gratuitous alterations to Handel's carefully calibrated scoring (for example, flutes tootling an octave above the oboes in the opening chorus). Rilling's direction of the choruses and arias is lively, sometimes hard-driven. Conversely, the recitatives are lugubriously drawn out, in the bad old Teutonic style. The standout among a fair-to-good team of soloists is



Saul premiered in 1739 at the King's Theatre; the libretto was by Leicestershire squire Charles Jennens



Daniel Taylor as David, luminous of tone, unfailingly eloquent in his phrasing and ornamentation. But his performance can't redeem an otherwise missable set.

In a performance directed by **Hans-Christoph Rademann** the following year, the spirited Dresden Chamber Choir suffers from the swimmy acoustic of the city's Frauenkirche. A pity, as Rademann's conducting has dramatic urgency (though the 'Dead March' and the chorus 'Mourn, Israel, mourn' are implausibly slow), and each of the soloists 'lives' their character. Tim Mead's David rivals Taylor's in vocal beauty and eloquence, Yorck Felix Speer's black-voiced Saul exudes a craggy grandeur, and tenor Maximilian Schmitt, sappier of tone than his English counterparts, dispatches Jonathan's 'But sooner Jordan's stream' with a mingled elegance and bravado unmatched on disc. The sisters are excellent, too, though as in Budday's and Rilling's recordings, a solo violin inexplicably replaces Handel's prescribed flute in Michal's 'Fell rage and black

despair'. Anna Prohaska is the outraged social snob in 'What abject thoughts', and brings an intensity to the lamenting 'From this unhappy day' that goes beyond pathos.

CREAM OF THE CROP

Paul McCreesh's 2002 recording with his Gabrieli Consort and Players was the first *Saul* on disc to offer a serious challenge to Gardiner. For many, one of the main draws will be the David of Andreas Scholl in his absolute prime. His caressing sweetness in 'O Lord, whose mercies numberless' almost vindicates McCreesh's ultra-slow tempo. Neal Davies's Saul is more contained in anger than some, but he sings with clean, incisive tone, and rises to the tragic grandeur of the Endor scene. Argenta, again as Michal, and Susan Gritton (whose intensely inward 'Author of peace' is a highlight) are well-nigh ideal as Saul's daughters, and Mark Padmore's Jonathan is lyrically elegant and vividly projected.

McCreesh favours a more direct, less moulded style of phrasing than Gardiner's.

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

RECORDING DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1962 Hemsley ⁵ , Watts ⁵ ; Vienna SO / Wöldike	Brilliant Classics (S) (65 discs) 95050; Vanguard/Bach Guild (F) (11/65*)
1972 McIntyre ⁵ , Bowman ⁵ ; ECO / Mackerras	Archiv (M) (3) 447 696-2AX3 (11/73*)
1979-80 Allen ⁵ , Esswood ⁵ ; ECO / Ledger	Warner Classics (S) (9) 083559-2
1985 Fischer-Dieskau ⁵ , Esswood ⁵ ; Concentus Musicus Wien / Harnoncourt	Warner Classics (S) (2) 2564 68698-3; (S) (6) 2564 69567-7; (S) (9) 9029 59751-1 (8/86*)
1989 Miles ⁵ , Ragin ⁵ ; EBS / Gardiner	Philips (S) (9) 475 6897DB9; (F) (3) (3) 426 265-2PH3 (8/91); (M) (3) (3) 475 8256POR3
1997 MacLeod ⁵ , Cordier ⁵ ; Frankfurt Baroque Orch / Martini	Naxos (B) (3) 8 554361/3 (6/99)
1997 Reinhart ⁵ , Koch ⁵ ; Collegium Cartusianum / P Neumann	MDG (M) (3) MDG332 0801-2 (9/98)
2002 Varcoe ⁵ , Chance ⁵ ; Hanover Hofkapelle / Budday	K&K (F) (2) KUK83
2002 N Davies ⁵ , Scholl ⁵ ; Gabrieli Consort & Players / McCreesh	Archiv (F) (3) 474 510-2AH3 (6/04)
2004 Saks ⁵ , Zazzo ⁵ ; Conc Köln / Jacobs	Harmonia Mundi (S) (2) HMY292 1877/8 (11/05*)
2007 Eiche ⁵ , Taylor ⁵ ; Bach-Collegium Stuttgart / Rilling	Hänssler Classic (F) (2) CD98 280
2008 Speer ⁵ , Mead ⁵ ; Dresden Baroque Orch / Rademann	Carus (F) (3) (3) CARUS83 243
2012 Purves ⁵ , Connolly ⁵ ; The Sixteen / Christophers	Coro (M) (3) COR16103 (10/12)
2015 Purves ⁵ , I Davies ⁵ ; OAE / Bolton	Opus Arte (F) (2) OA1216D; (B) (5) (5) OA1225BD; (F) (3) OABD7205D; (M) (4) (4) OABD7211BD

Key: *Saul David

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The most obvious contrasts come in the choral climaxes of the first two acts. Whereas Gardiner treats 'Preserve him for the glory of thy name' as a hushed prayer, McCreesh makes it an urgent exhortation; and while Gardiner's chorus opens 'O fatal consequence of rage' in a state of numb shock, McCreesh's singers react with stark immediacy. Each is convincing, though Gardiner's broader tempo at the groping chromatic fugue conveys a deeper sense of impending tragedy.

René Jacobs's 2004 recording has an obvious advantage over its rivals in fitting on two discs, mainly because Jacobs takes some movements daringly – but never breathlessly – fast. This is an operatic, viscerally exciting *Saul*. Recitatives, creatively adorned by the harpsichord, have an edge-of-seat tension. One number tumbles into the next, though the Elegy has all the tragic nobility you could wish for. The celebratory choruses are unrivalled in brassy boldness – and never mind the added trombones in 'Along the monster atheist strode'. In choruses and solos alike, Jacobs goes for dramatic truth over smooth vocal finish: 'Preserve him' is a desperate communal *cri de coeur*, and only the over-inflected 'Envy' chorus strikes me as mannered.

Gidon Saks, a Verdian bass, is the most sheerly dangerous Saul on disc, though his uneven voice production is exposed in the dissembling 'As great Jehovah lives'. Emma Bell (Merab), with a glint of metal in her tone, and the more sensuous Rosemary Joshua (Michal) are beautifully cast as the sisters, and Jeremy Ovenden's Jonathan emerges as more heroic than usual. Lawrence Zazzo's countertenor, darker than Scholl's, has an uncommonly strong low register; and from the dramatic central section of David's opening aria he makes you believe that the Orphic singer is also a warrior.

CRÈME DE LA CRÈME

The most recent *Saul* on CD (2012), from **Harry Christophers** and The Sixteen, may not match Jacobs's high-octane theatricality, yet this performance – superbly played and sung, unfussily yet sympathetically shaped – is hardly less exhilarating, and at least as moving. The impact of the 18-strong choir belies its numbers, and words invariably tell, not least in an 'Along the monster atheist strode' that outdoes all comers in grotesquerie. Handel



Christophers's version: 'superbly performed, sympathetically shaped'

might have been surprised at Christophers's tempo – broader even than Gardiner's – in 'Preserve him', underlining the music's *stile antico* origins. I find the effect spellbinding. The mighty framing choruses of Act 2, unerringly built to their climaxes, have a comparable gravitas.

If Christophers's chorus is second to none, it is his soloists who clinch my choice for a *Saul* on CD. Taking his cue from fragmentary indications that Handel originally conceived the part of David for a female mezzo, Christophers casts Sarah Connolly. Her even, glowing timbre and verbal sensitivity make for a glorious 'O Lord, whose mercies numberless'. In Act 3 her reserves of power mean that she can denounce the poor Amalekite with unforced venom, where countertenors are apt to sound petulant or flustered. Joëlle Harvey sings the most tenderly assuaging 'Fell rage and black despair' on disc, and Elizabeth Atherton relishes the sneering contempt of Merab's opening arias and finds an aptly veiled tone for 'Author of peace'. Christopher Purves's Saul is a huge presence whose range encompasses blind fury (his 'With rage I shall burst his praises to hear!' rivals Saks's in terror), honeyed suavity and the agony of self-knowledge at Endor. On almost all other recordings either the Witch of Endor (so often hammed) or the Ghost of Samuel (wobbly and/or underpowered) is a handicap. Not here. Jeremy Budd's Witch is rightly done straight (Handel's eerie, lopsided music provides the necessary frisson), and Stuart Young sings with grave nobility as Samuel.

While I wouldn't be without Jacobs (an invigorating non-English take on *Saul*), Gardiner or McCreesh, Christophers's performance, more than any other, marries consistently fine Handel singing with a thrilling command of the oratorio's grand narrative sweep. There are no quirks, and no casting weaknesses that can rankle on repeated hearings. 'Magnificent in every way that matters most', was David Vickers's verdict in his original review. Exactly so.

I'd urge you to complement Christophers on CD with the DVD of Barrie Kosky's Glyndebourne production of *Saul*, conducted by **Ivor Bolton**, likewise with Purves as Saul. Purves here presents a vocally and visually mesmerising portrayal of (in Kosky's concept) an epileptic who descends by stages from extravagant buffoonery into

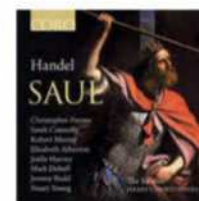
broken, childish helplessness, with echoes of Lear on the heath. At Endor, Saul is suckled by John Graham-Hall's maternal parody of a Witch in one of many moments in Kosky's production that blur grotesquerie and pathos. The High Priest (Benjamin Hulett) here becomes a malign, physically repugnant court jester. Merab (Lucy Crowe) remains neurotically disturbed to the end. Even David (the superlative Iestyn Davies) cuts a passive, ambivalent figure. Only the Cordelia-like Michal (tenderly sung by Sophie Bevan), cradling Saul's head during 'In sweetest harmony they lived', suggests a deeper humanity. Kosky's violently excessive, Hogarth-meets-Shakespeare take on a dysfunctional family and doomed society, powerfully realised by chorus, soloists and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment, is one of the great Handel oratorio productions: as disturbingly compelling in its theatrical momentum and psychological insights as Peter Sellars's Glyndebourne *Theodora* – and I can't praise more highly than that. **G**

TOP CHOICE

The Sixteen / Christophers

Coro **M** **3** COR16103

Christophers and his elite forces unerringly catch both the ceremonial splendour and the



Old Testament gravitas of *Saul*. Christopher Purves gives the most complete and disturbing performance of the troubled monarch on disc.

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

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Royal College of Music, London & BBC Four BBC Young Musician of the Year

Exact broadcast details for the BBC Young Musician weren't confirmed as we went to press, but what we can tell you is that the BBC launches its coverage of the competition in April. Open to string, percussion, woodwind, brass and keyboard players under the age of 18, the winner of which receives a cash prize of £3000. Each finalist also receives the support of a two-year aftercare scheme paid for by the BBC and run by the Young Classical Artist Trust (YCAT). The 2016 edition of this major biennial BBC competition was won by the cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason, following in the footsteps of luminaries such as the pianist Benjamin Grosvenor and the violinists Jennifer Pike and Nicola Benedetti. So we'll be watching this year's competitors with interest ...

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Phyllida Lloyd's 2002 production of Verdi's Shakespearean masterpiece depicts the Macbeths' childlessness as the root of their terrible deeds, set against Anthony Ward's black, red and gold staging with its ever-present scarlet-turbaned witches. Sir Antonio Pappano conducts this revival, with a cast

headed up by Željko Lučić as Macbeth, Anna Netrebko as Lady Macbeth alongside Ildebrando D'Arcangelo as Banquo and Yusif Eyvazov (aka Mr Netrebko) as Macduff.

roh.org.uk/showings

Orchestra Hall, Detroit & online

Leonard Slatkin conducts Strauss, Wagner and Bartók, April 7

This live-streamed concert from the Detroit Symphony Orchestra under their Music Director Leonard Slatkin offers up a particularly nice balance of the well-known and the different. In the first category are Wagner's *Siegfried Idyll* and Richard Strauss's *Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks*. Novelty is ticked firstly by way of the world premiere of a new work by Steven Bryant. Then, the soloist for Bartók's Violin Concerto No 2 will be an unfamiliar name – at least to European audiences – because it's none other than the Detroit's Concertmaster since 2012, Yoonshin Song.

dso.org

The Gothenburg Concert Hall & online at GSOPlay

Lars Danielsson World Premiere, April 12

This live-streamed concert from the Gothenburg Symphony is a far from run-of-the-mill classical offering, its headline event

being a brand-new concerto for cor anglais and double bass by jazz bassist and composer Lars Danielsson, who takes one of the solo spots himself, alongside the cor anglais player Björn Bohlin for whom he wrote the piece. Sitting either side of the concerto are Ives's *Three Places in New England* and Hindemith's *Mathis der Maler*, and all of this will be under the guest baton of just the person you'd want for such a programme, new-music champion André de Ridder.

gso.se/en/gsoeplay/video/makela/

Geneva École Internationale, Conservatoire de musique Genève, Victoria Hall

Menuhin Competition, April 12-22

For violinists this biennial competition is one of the real biggies, with previous winners whose careers it has launched including Tasmin Little (1985) and Ray Chen (2008). This year it's Geneva's turn to host, following on from London in 2016, and the 44 violinists from 16 countries have been selected from a record-breaking number of applications. To give you some interesting trivia, there's been a drop in the average age of participants this year, with the youngest competitor now just 10, and the oldest 21. A very healthy proportion of the 10 days of music making will be live streamed too, both on the competition website and on Arte.TV: both the Junior and Senior first

ONLINE CONCERT REVIEW

Duncan Ward directs Ensemble Intercontemporain in Jonathan Harvey's *Bhakti* for 15 players and tape

Harvey

Few pieces speak more clearly of Jonathan Harvey's quest to 'see through the delusions of conventional reality and experience liberation' than *Bhakti*. The composer's 12-part work for 15 players and tape spreads outwards from a single note into a joyous act of spectral devotion that appears to celebrate the capabilities of the human mind as much as drill into them. It is meditative even at its most ferocious. The score, written in 1982, graced the first-ever issue from the NMC label and topped Liam Cagney's 'Specialist's Guide to IRCAM' in last September's *Gramophone*.

This performance from Ensemble



Intercontemporain reminds us that Harvey was a composer of huge discipline but also deep spirituality (*Bhakti* translates

as 'devotion to god as a means of salvation'). The use of timbre as a controlling force is one of the piece's most remarkable qualities but it takes some realisation in practise; here we can feel the effect the electronic elements have on the colour choices and blend of the acoustic instruments. Simple, remote camerawork underlines the sense of meditation and in some long passages for tape alone many a players' eyes are fastened shut in communion. Duncan Ward's direction is both forensic and joyful while never trespassing on that state of transcendence – quite

some achievement. **Andrew Mellor**

Available to stream for free at ensembleinter.com

Fabio Biondi directs a rare concert performance of Gluck's *Le Cinesi* from Valencia

Gluck

Like *Orfeo ed Euridice*, *Le Cinesi* ('The Chinese Ladies') is an *azione teatrale*. It was first staged in 1754 before the Empress Maria Theresa and her family, the libretto provided by Metastasio. That production was extravagantly designed by Giovanni Maria Quaglio; this performance from Valencia is a simple concert, the four singers ranged behind the small orchestra.

There's no plot to speak of. Lisinga, Sivene and Tangia are wondering how to alleviate their boredom. When Silango appears – he's the brother of Lisinga and lover of Sivene – they decide to adopt



European manners and indulge in some acting. Each sings an aria in turn, after which they unite in a quartet. Lisinga goes first, with an accompanied recitative and aria expressing Andromache's despair at Pyrrhus's threat to kill her son. Silvia Tro Santafé manages the combination

of passion and parody very well, and the others are no less accomplished: Ann Hallenberg is particularly engaging in Tangia's commentary on Parisian manners.

Fabio Biondi directs the modern-instrument orchestra from his violin, duetting eloquently with Désirée Rancatore in Sivene's aria. After the Sinfonia there's an hour of singing: one third of this consists of *secco* recitative, but the performers' lively delivery – and the subtitles – will hold your attention.

Richard Lawrence

Available to watch for free until May 23, 2018 at operavision.eu

rounds, semi-finals and finals, plus the day of masterclasses at the Geneva Conservatoire. If you're in Switzerland then you'll want to know that the Junior finals are being filmed for later transmission on Radio Télévision Suisse. menuhincompetition.org, arte.tv

Wigmore Hall & online

Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition semi-finals and finals, April 14-15

This triennial competition was won in 2015 by the Van Kuijk Quartet. This year's line-up is an interesting-looking spread of quartets from the US, Europe (including the UK's current City Music Foundation Artists, the Gildas Quartet) and Japan, and they're competing for a top prize which includes £10,000, a concert tour of the UK and residencies at venues such as Canada's Banff Centre. The jury chaired by the Wigmore's Director John Gilhooly is a heavyweight one too, including the viola player Nobuko Imai, the cellist András Fejér from the Takács Quartet, and the violinist Heime Müller formerly of the Artemis Quartet. Preliminary Rounds are held at the Royal Academy of Music, then the armchair viewing possibilities begin with the Semi-Finals and Finals, which take place at Wigmore Hall while also being streamed live on its website. If you happen to be in London over the period then you'll also be interested in the competition's surrounding programme, which consists both of concerts from the competing quartets, and from established former prizewinners such as the Belcea and Artemis quartets.

wigmore-hall.org.uk/string-quartet-competition

Carnegie Hall, New York

Masterclass with Joyce DiDonato, April 21-23

'Why do you sing?' was the thought-provoking question on the application form for these

Carnegie Hall masterclasses with star mezzo Joyce DiDonato, to which opera singers aged between 18 and 25 were able to apply. In other words, the four selected singers you can watch across these three days have been chosen as much for their thoughts and overall musicianship as for their voices, which should add further to what's already guaranteed to be a fascinating fly-on-the-wall experience for anyone interested in the development of the young operatic voice. The classes take place Carnegie Hall's Resnick Education Wing, and in addition to the actual masterclasses there are sessions on breathing, movement and career development.

carnegiehall.org, medici.tv

Stern Auditorium/Perelman Stage, Carnegie Hall, New York & online at WQXR

Kremerata Baltica and Daniil Trifonov, April 25

This WQXR radio/online broadcast is going to be of special interest to UK-based readers, because Kremerata Baltica isn't regularly to be seen on UK concert platforms (despite appearances last year in Scotland). Founded in 1997 by the Latvian violinist Gidon Kremer as a 50th-birthday present to himself, the ensemble is comprised of 23 young musicians drawn from Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, and this concert sees them join forces with the pianist Daniil Trifonov in an all-Chopin programme that forms part of his 'Perspectives' series for Carnegie Hall. On the bill are works to be found on Trifonov's recent 'Evocations' recording with the Mahler Chamber Orchestra – the *Variations on 'Là ci darem la mano'* (arranged by Andrei Pushkarev), and the First Piano Concerto (arranged by Yevgeny Sharlat) – plus the Mazurka in A minor, Op 17 No 4 (arranged by Victor Kissine), and the Piano Trio in G minor, Op 8 for which Trifonov joins Kremer and the cellist Giedrė Dirvanauskaitė.

carnegiehall.org/Events/Season-Highlights/WQXR-Broadcasts

Salle Garnier, Opera de Monte Carlo & European Union Radio

Premiere of new cello concerto from Bruno Mantovani, April 29

This year's Festival Printemps des Arts Monte Carlo, themed around Mozart and Ives, has been running since mid-March, and continues until the end of the month. Unusually for a festival, you can actually enjoy it from the comfort of your own home (much as we rather fancy the idea of a trip to Monte Carlo) because nearly every single concert is being broadcast internationally on European Union Radio. If you speak French then you might also be interested in the festival's 24/7 radio programme covering the concerts and repertoire, and featuring artist interviews; you can find this either on the festival website or on the festival's new app. Here, though, we draw your attention though the world premiere of a new cello concerto by Bruno Mantovani. Marc Coppey is the cello soloist with the Orchestre Symphonique de Monte Carlo, conducted by Pacal Rophé.

printempsdesarts.mc

Foyles, London & online at Facebook Live Ian Page in Conversation, May 2

Classical Opera and The Mozartists' Director Ian Page talks to *Gramophone's* James Jolly about his Mozart 250 series and Mozart's visit to London in 1764 and '65. The conversation, and a performance by the soprano Eleanor Dennis, will be streamed live, so keep an eye on *Gramophone's* Facebook page. Tickets are £8 or (to include the brand-new two-CD Signum set 'Mozart in London') £22.

foyles.co.uk, [facebook.com/gramophonemagazine](https://www.facebook.com/gramophonemagazine)

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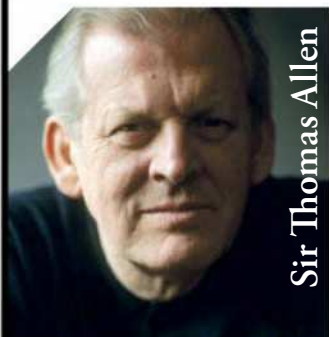
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THIS MONTH A top-notch network player from Pioneer, a complete multiroom system from Norway and why what hasn't stayed in Vegas is coming to Europe

Andrew Everard, Audio Editor

APRIL TEST DISCS



This Bach disc for keyboard and violin may not please purists – piano, not harpsichord – but it is a typically clean, detailed and expressive ECM set.



Benefiting from the extra resolution of 96kHz/24-bit recording, this reading of Paganini's Caprices is beautifully captured by Warner Classics

No new hi-fi? Far from it ...

Far from giving in to smartphones and Bluetooth speakers, the industry continues to innovate and entice

The word from the annual CES in Las Vegas at the beginning of the year was that hi-fi was (even) thinner on the ground, although there's little sign that the industry as a whole is ready to put up the shutters. From high-quality amplifiers to innovative network music players, there's plenty to keep us interested.

For those seeking great sound in a compact form, Astell & Kern – best known for its range of portable players – has launched the striking-looking ACRO L1000 **1**, a combined DAC/amplifier designed to drive either headphones or speakers in a desktop or other compact system. Using the same AK4490 DACs as in the company's high-end pocket players, the £799 ACRO L1000 has a USB input and can handle PCM-based audio up to 384kHz/32-bit and DSD in native form up to 11.2MHz. It has outputs for conventional headphones via 3.5mm and 6.3mm outputs, and balanced designs on 2.5mm and XLR connections. In addition, it has a set of speaker binding posts on the rear of its wedge-shaped aluminium housing, able to deliver 15W per channel, and features optional high-gain and bass boost to make the most of the sound. Volume control is via the substantial knurled wheel atop the unit.

Also designed to drive headphones is the new Exposure XM HP **2**, at £1299 the latest addition to the UK-based company's compact XM series. A remarkably flexible device, it can drive two pairs of headphones using twin 6.3mm sockets and a pair of

four-pin XLRs, and has both a built-in phono stage for turntables and a DAC able to handle files at up to 192kHz/24-bit and DSD64. There are also four digital inputs – two optical and two coaxial – alongside a USB socket for computer connection, and two analogue inputs. Both fixed- and variable-level outputs are provided, allowing the XM HP to act as an external DAC for conventional amplification or to be used straight into a power amp or active speakers. It's available in black and silver finishes.

Another British company, ATC, has announced a 're-engineered' version of its CDA 2 CD player/DAC/pre-amp. The £2950 CDA 2 Mk2 **3** has gained a USB digital input compatible with files at up to 384kHz/32-bit and DSD256, and has a new TEAC-sourced CD transport with lower mechanical noise, better error correction and faster seek/play operations. The digital-to-analogue conversion is now in the hands of a premium DAC from AKM and the analogue circuitry has been extensively reworked, with input buffering and a differential output, designed with parallel positive and negative sections. There's also a reworked headphone amp, designed to handle a wide range of impedances.

Hot on the heels of its Poly streaming module (reviewed last month),

designed for use with the pocket-size Mojo DAC/headphone amp, Chord Electronics has announced the Qutest **4**, claimed to be 'the world's most advanced

compact DAC'. Selling for £1195, it's based on the company's Hugo 2 DAC but reduces the price by removing that model's headphone amplifier, battery operation and crossfeed facility. Using the FPGA architecture designed by Chord's Rob Watts, the Qutest can handle files up to 768kHz/32-bit and DSD512, and features user selectable filters to shape the sound. Housed in all-new aluminium casework, it has a galvanically isolated USB-B 'computer audio' input along with optical and coaxial ins and special 768kHz-capable dual-data inputs for use with other Chord devices. The analogue output is on RCA phonos.

Finally this month, a product designed as a complete digital hub for a wide range of sources. The £1099 Marantz ND8006 **5** is a CD/network player with DAC functionality, able to play music from a computer or NAS via a home network, connect directly to a computer for ultra-hi-res playback up to 11.2Mhz quad-DSD and 384kHz/32-bit PCM or stream internet radio and music services. Bluetooth and AirPlay are included for wireless connection to portable devices. The ND8006 uses the company's Marantz Musical Mastering upconversion and a high-quality ESS9016 Sabre DAC. **6**



● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Pioneer N-70AE

An all-in-one network player/DAC with upmarket aspirations could take on the established high-end streaming rivals

Once, the streaming arena was very simple. On one hand you had the high-end network audio solutions from the likes of Linn and Naim, best considered as dealer-installation propositions but capable of striking performance; on the other were simple mini-systems from the big mass-audio brands, able to do the basics of music from a network server, computer or internet radio and designed for the casual listener.

As the market has matured, however, the two have moved closer together and the major names of audio – as opposed to the high-end – have launched ever more upmarket offerings, providing wide-ranging compatibility with both different file formats and a range of streaming services. The player we have here, Pioneer's £1199 N-70AE, is typical of this new breed, along with the new Marantz ND8006, which hit the shops recently.

The concept of both models is the same: to act as a complete 'hub' for all a user's digital audio needs, including streaming from a home server or internet sources, and playing high-resolution music straight from a computer via a USB link. It's a trend we're also seeing in network AV receivers from the likes of Pioneer and its stablemate Onkyo, Denon/Marantz and Yamaha. However while those home cinema behemoths are even more multifunctional devices, including hi-res video switching and the ability to drive an ever-growing number of channels for the latest surround-sound formats, what we have here is – despite its flexibility – a purist

audio-focused player, all about delivering the best possible sound from digital music.

Pioneer has been developing its network audio offering for some time and its current range includes the model we have here as well as the less expensive N-50AE, offering a similar range of facilities but simpler audio engineering. Both models support both hi-res FLAC/WAV/AIFF/ALAC, the N-70AE extending its compatibility up to 384kHz/32-bit, and can also handle DSD up to 11.2MHz/DSD256, meaning they cover all the formats currently available, even the super-hi-res files offered by the likes of 2L and NativeDSD.

Despite its flexibility, this is a purist audio-focused player, all about delivering the best possible sound from digital music

The N-70AE also supports Spotify Connect, Deezer and Tidal streaming services, has Chromecast built in to allow audio to be played from other apps, receives internet radio and provides Apple AirPlay for streaming wirelessly from iOS devices and computers running iTunes. There's also a pair of USB Type A sockets – one on the front, one to the rear – to which memory devices containing music can be connected for playback. This memory can be accessed over a home network to which the N-70AE is connected, so files can be



PIONEER N-70AE

Type Network music player/DAC

Price £1199

Formats played MP3/WMA/AAC to 320kbps plus VBR, FLAC/WAV/AIFF/ALAC to 384kHz/32-bit, DSD to 11.2MHz/DSD256 (depending on input)

Inputs Two USB Type A, asynchronous USB Type B, optical/coaxial digital, AirPlay, Chromecast, DLNA network audio

Networking Ethernet, dual-band Wi-Fi

Audio outputs RCA, balanced XLR, headphones, optical/coaxial digital

Services supported Spotify Connect, Tidal, Deezer

Accessories supplied Remote handset, analogue audio and power cables, two Wi-Fi antennae

Finishes Black or silver

Dimensions (WxHxD) 43.5x12.1x36.4cm

pioneer-audiovisual.eu

added or deleted. That asynchronous Type B lets the N-70AE operate as a soundcard with a computer, with drivers available on the Pioneer website for both PC and Mac computers, and the player can even interface with multiroom audio systems via Chromecast, FlareConnect or DTS Play-Fi.

Of course, all this flexibility is one thing but the vital part is the audio section of any such device, and the Pioneer has that sorted very well, too. The digital-to-analogue conversion is based round the respected ESS Sabre ES 90165 DAC, the player using two of these converters in dual differential mode for accuracy and low noise, and the N-70AE offers a direct mode for the simplest signal

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ROTEL RA-1572

With balanced inputs to match the Pioneer's outputs, Rotel's RA-1572 integrated amplifier has the power and finesse to deliver fine music.



BOWERS & WILKINS 704 S2

The Bowers & Wilkins 704 S2 speakers combine weight and refinement in a sleek, relatively compact design.



path or a range of digital processing options. Incoming signals are upsampled to 384kHz and processed at 'Hi-bit 32' for the best resolution, there's a three-step digital filter selection and the lock range of the conversion can be narrowed for optimal sound or widened with sources giving drop-outs. In addition, the digital outputs can be turned off for optimal sound quality, there's a choice of conventional single-ended RCA phono outputs or balanced output on XLRs and the front-panel headphone socket has its own dedicated amplifier.

The build of the unit is impressively solid. The internal layout is partitioned to avoid interference between the power supply, digital and analogue audio sections, and twin transformers are used to keep apart the power supplies for the digital and analogue parts of the player. The internal partitions also have the effect of stiffening the whole construction.

PERFORMANCE

The N-70AE can be operated using no more than the front-panel display and the remote handset supplied but operation is smoother and more intuitive with Pioneer's Remote App running on an Android or iOS handheld device via a network connection. On which subject, the Pioneer can be connected to the home network using its dual-band Wi-Fi, the twin antennae making it work well even with less-than-ideal signal strength; but if you're thinking of streaming anything much beyond CD quality I'd suggest the use of the wired Ethernet connection for ultimate stability. It's very much worth exploring all of this player's capabilities, from simple things such as internet radio – perhaps helped by the effect of the Auto Sound Retriever facility provided here and the standard, 'Sharp' digital filter setting – all the way through to high sampling rate/bit depth or DSD files.

The N-70AE sounds detailed and wide open, delivering excellent resolution of instrumental timbres and the expression of performers. With the busy live recording of Heggie's *Great Scott* (Erato, 2/18), where the breakneck libretto can blur on some players, the 96kHz/24-bit files sound clean and detailed via the Pioneer, as well as

demonstrating fine bass weight and speed allied to an airy openness that really brings out the atmosphere of the performance, operatic in-jokes included, and the reactions of the audience. Similarly, with Det Norske Jentekor's lovely 'Folketoner' album, an exemplary 2L recording in DSD256, the sheer amount of information the Pioneer delivers adds to the experience of the music rather than distracting from it. The delicate choral textures are strikingly revealed, as is the reverberation of the church acoustic, to create an almost ethereal effect. The music seems to hang in space in the room, free from the speakers, and the ambience of the venue is conjured up in a seemingly magical manner.

And even large-scale orchestral works are handled with total ease, as is clear when listening to Stravinsky's *Firebird* suite under Jansons (RCO Live, 9/08) in DSD64. The NA-70AE has speed, deftness and dynamic ability, plus a full, rich but tightly controlled bass, ensuring the lyrical passages of the work are as thrilling as the more obviously dramatic moments. It's that combination of the delineation of the finest detail in a recording allied to the slam required to deliver realistic orchestral impact that sets this player apart from lesser offerings, creating a sound that satisfies on both hi-fi considerations and on purely musical terms.

What's more, the music is delivered in a totally unforced manner but the sound is a forceful as one might wish when that's what's required. It may seem strange to be talking about power and weight when describing a source component, as some might consider such factors to be traits of fine amplification and speakers, but the excellent audio engineering within this hefty player – it tips the scales at some 11.4kg – is what gives the rest of a system something substantial to get its teeth into.

This Pioneer player is a serious contender in the high-end network music arena and does a fine job of offering everything the serious 'computer audio' listener could want, while remaining easy to use. This is a player more than good enough to be used with very high-quality amplification and speakers – which is just what you should consider if you're to hear all it can do. **G**

Or you could try...

Network music players come in many forms, from simple units such as the Google Chromecast Audio unit at just £30, designed to play music from your phone or tablet, to high-end units with prices well into five figures.

Chord Mojo/Poly

You can have your network player built into a mini-system, in an AV receiver or even in a pocketable player, such as the Chord Mojo/Poly package reviewed last month. Selling for £898 together, the two give not just network streaming but also a DAC/headphone amplifier, and can even play music stored on memory cards. More details from chordelectronics.co.uk.



Cambridge Audio CXN(V2)

Cambridge Audio's CXN(V2) sells for around £800 and offers streaming capability up to DSD64, as well as compatibility with radio streams up to 320kbps. See cambridgeaudio.com.



Bluesound Node 2

Bluesound's Node 2 takes streaming even further – it's designed to become part of a multiroom system capable of streaming music all round the house, working with other BluOS components and selected NAD hi-fi components. It sells for £499. See bluesound.com for more.



Marantz ND8006

The £1099 Marantz ND8006 is the latest in an impressive line of network players from one of the leading names in hi-fi and is designed as a complete digital music hub. Not only will it play music from your computer or NAS, internet radio or services such as Spotify and Tidal, it also acts as a computer audio DAC able to handle files all the way up to 384kHz/32-bit and DSD256 – and even has a built-in CD player and can integrate with the HEOS multiroom system. See marantz.co.uk.



● REVIEW ELECTROCOMPANIET TANA AND RENA

Persuasive Norwegian multiroom

The high-end company has gone it alone in developing its own EC Living range of multiroom audio products

Everyone's doing it – going multiroom, that is. From a couple of brands offering whole-house audio a few years ago, now it seems almost every company either has, or is planning, systems to spread your music round the home. Investing in such technology is a major move for any company, so it's perhaps surprising to see a relatively specialist manufacturer like Electrocompaniet moving into this arena. Previously best known for its high-end, somewhat purist products, the company has been in business for around 40 years from its base in Stavanger, and what we have here are two line-ups of products as part of a new EC Living line.

While neither offers anything we haven't seen before from other brands – there's an all-in-one streaming speaker plus an add-on to give stereo, a pre-amp-level adaptor to connect existing amplification to streaming networks and a similar 'just add speakers' version with built-in amplification – the Tana and Rena lines bring to bear all of the company's extensive experience in high-end audio. What's more, they're among the most affordable Electrocompaniet products, and there are moves to integrate the existing range – now called the Classic line – with these multiroom-capable devices.

Affordable? Well, the Tana SL-1, which is the all-in-one streaming speaker, is £665 and can be used alone under control from the inevitable app or with the add-on L-1 speaker (£556), which is wireless but lacks the streaming capability, to give stereo and to fill larger spaces with music. The basic Rena unit is the £582 S-1, which is a streaming device designed to be used with existing amplifiers or systems, connecting via either analogue or digital hook-ups, while the SA-1 adds 75 watts per channel of amplification, enabling it to be used with conventional passive speakers. You can even adjust the tonal balance of the output of these Rena devices to suit the speakers in use, and the SA 1 sells for just £28 more than the S-1, at £610.

As well as playing music stored on a home network, for example on a computer or NAS device, all the units are compatible with internet radio and streaming services including Spotify Connect, Tidal and Qobuz. AirPlay is also supported, while

digital inputs and a USB port allow direct playback options. Using 192kHz/24-bit digital-to-analogue conversion and 32-bit floating-point digital signal processing, they can handle hi-res audio all the way up to DSD128, as well as all the common data-reduced formats.

PERFORMANCE

The Tana speakers may be compact, at just 25cm tall and a little under 18cm wide and deep, but they still pack plenty of power, with a 150W Class AB amplifier driving separate tweeter and woofer, mounted in a rigid aluminium enclosure with bass reflex loading. Set-up and control of the units is possible using the EC Remote app for either Android or Apple iOS devices, or it's possible to access them from a computer on the same network via a browser interface. The PC interface is slightly fiddlier, as you have to work out the IP address your router has assigned to the device, while on Macs connection involves little more than inputting the last four digits of the product's serial number.

This little unit reveals a level of communication and involvement sufficient to make me forget about mono, let alone the compact dimensions

That done, you can access various EC Living products around the home, or indeed combine Tana and Rena models into zones, to which the same music will be played. The process is simple and intuitive, and it didn't take me long to have the entire 'goody box' of samples supplied by the company, comprising both speakers plus the SA-1 network amplifier, set up and communicating.

The immediate impression, even just using a single SL-1 speaker, is that this is a very superior 'convenience audio' system. Playing a range of music through this little unit reveals a level of communication and involvement sufficient to make this listener forget about mono, let alone the compact dimensions, with good instrumental timbres and even a persuasive sense of scale with orchestral, choral and operatic recordings.

SPECIFICATION TANA SL-1/L-1

Type Streaming speaker/add-on active speaker

Price £665/£556

Inputs (SL-1) Ethernet, Wi-Fi, optical/coaxial digital, USB-A, (SL-1/L-1) 96kHz/24-bit wireless network

Streaming services

(SL-1) DLNA, AirPlay, Qobuz, Spotify Connect, Tidal

File formats PCM-based to 192kHz/24-bit, DSD to 5.6MHz

Amplifier 150W Class AB

Finishes Silver, black, copper

Dimensions (HxWxD) 24.9x17.7x17.7cm



SPECIFICATION RENA SA-1/S-1

Type Streaming amplifier/client

Price £610/£582

Inputs Ethernet, Wi-Fi, optical/coaxial digital, USB-A, 96kHz/24-bit wireless network

Outputs coaxial digital, variable line analogue, (SA-1) speakers

Streaming services DLNA, AirPlay, Qobuz, Spotify Connect, Tidal

File formats PCM-based to 192kHz/24-bit, DSD to 5.6MHz

Amplifier (SA-1) 75Wpc Class D

Finishes Silver, black, copper

Dimensions (WxHxD) 18x4.7x18cm

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Add a second speaker and things really open up, to the point where for some listeners a Tana SL-1/L-1 system, plus computer stored music or access to streaming services, could be all that's really needed. And the app makes adding on that extra speaker simple: it's little more than a 'drag and drop' process. I used the Rena SA-1 both as an add-on to my existing system and to make an extra zone, the speaker outputs driving my compact Neat Iota Alpha speakers in a very convincing manner, both in terms of delivering exciting dynamics and also in the focus and detail on offer.

Even without all the rest the EC Living system can offer, the S-1 would offer an excellent way of adding streaming capability to an existing system, while either the SL-1/L-1 or an SA-1 and a pair of conventional speakers would make a very attractive standalone streaming set-up. Electrocompaniet has clearly put a lot into developing this system and the work has paid off. This is a flexible, easy to use and rather superior-sounding network/multiroom set-up. 🎧

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ESSAY

Hi-fi has a future – if only we can work out what it is

After a year of takeovers and consolidations, the mood in some sectors of the audio industry seems somewhat bleak – but adapting to change is only part of the solution



Scenes from the shows: two views of CES in Las Vegas; the Munich High End Show; Bristol Sound & Vision

Writing this as the massive CES 2018 consumer electronics event recedes into memory, and before the European hi-fi show calendar really kicks into gear, it's hard not to feel that specialist audio – and in particular high-end audio – is at something of a crossroads. Certainly the feedback from the show in Las Vegas was mixed, to say the least: there were still the massive stands from the major players in consumer electronics, such as LG, Panasonic, Samsung and Sony, but also a lot more attention being grabbed by large displays and events from the likes of Ford, Hyundai, Toyota, Renault/Nissan/Mitsubishi and so on.

Meanwhile the specialist audio companies – which some years back filled not only their own hotel but also spilled out into a large 'outboard' show, then moved to occupying several floors of one of the huge casino hotels – now occupied a number of rooms on just one floor, with only a couple of the massive suites previously packed with demonstrations in use this year.

Yes, there was a high-end audio exhibit on the main showfloor but again the focus was very much on portable and personal devices, and those colleagues who attended the show with a brief to cover 'specialty audio', as it tends to be termed in CES-world, came away disappointed. And it must be noted that the numbers attending with such a brief were greatly diminished this year, both among the international press and even the domestic US media – there were a lot of 'why I won't be going to CES' articles written before the show, and more than a few 'why I won't be going again' pieces afterwards.

Mind, there were the odd items of interest, such as more turntables from the revived Technics brand – this time, a re-engineering of the SP-10 direct-drive model widely used in radio studios and the

like, and in fact the world's first direct-drive turntable when it first appeared in 1970. Available as motor unit alone, to which an arm needs to be added, the SP-10R – the 'R' is for Reference – is clearly aimed very high, as a price estimated at around \$10,000 confirms. And there's an even more expensive version, the SL-1000R, which at least adds an arm and plinth.

So not much hi-fi at CES, and most of it riding on the coat tails of much larger displays by huge parent companies – as the announcement of some new Arcam models did on the presence of owner Harman, and in turn *its* owner, Samsung. And what there was generally carried eye-watering pricing, way beyond the means of even most well-heeled audiophiles.

The challenge is to lure the 'lost generation' to these events to experience how good their music can sound

A bit grim all round? Well, a German colleague of mine sums it up thus: 'These days, the stars of these shows are either cheap "does it all" plastic which is hardly joyful, or extremely expensive devices designed to keep the revenues up as the numbers diminish. In some cases the latest thing is no better than its predecessor, but costs a lot more. It seems mainstream customers are satisfied with Bluetooth from their phone or digital radio with data rates far below FM quality, meaning that those coming back after years to see what happened since they bought their (really good) systems are shocked.'

If the mainstream consumer electronics majors seem to a great extent to have moved on from hi-fi and into ever bigger and thinner TV screens, car infotainment systems and the like – or at least to have acquired hi-fi brands and placed them

in little ghettos within their portfolios, while mining them for what technology and brand equity they have – there's no shortage of innovation going on on a smaller scale. You only need to look at some of the products featured in these pages in recent months, from Chord's Mojo/Poly to Electrocompaniet's EC Living range, or indeed have a read of the news page at the beginning of this section, to see that in action.

There are shows that present these products to both enthusiasts and a wider range of consumers: many of those I've heard saying they have done their last CES are instead planning to attend the Munich High End show in May – yes, including many of those US-based journalists, manufacturers and distributors – which is already reporting it will have over 500 brands represented in almost 140 rooms for its 37th show. Meanwhile, on a slightly smaller scale, the famous Bristol Sound and Vision show at the end of February was, at the time of going to press, reporting a sell-out of its exhibition space, with 131 brands signed up for its 31st staging. And not a drone or an internet-connected personal grooming aid in sight!

Now, of course, the challenge is to find ways to lure the 'lost generation' – those who think audio begins with a phone and ends with a £50 Bluetooth speaker – into attending these events and experiencing how good their music can sound. The same applies to specialist hi-fi retailers, who need to bring in just such customers if they're to succeed. But that's probably another essay for another time.

For now, I don't regret missing what seemed like a fairly dispiriting few days in the desert for those of us interested in great music played to a very high standard. But as I write this I have my trips to Bristol and Munich booked, and I'm feeling pretty upbeat about the future of hi-fi. **G**

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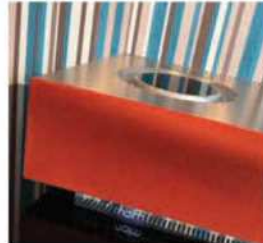
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NOTES & LETTERS

Teodor Currentzis's Tchaikovsky • Klemperer's Don Giovanni • Celebrating the Järvi family

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Currentzis's Tchaikovsky ...

Peter Quantrill's characteristically thoughtful review (January, page 30) of Teodor Currentzis's recording of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* Symphony prompted me not only to hear it for myself, but also to recall the 1991 Virgin Classics account (which I produced) by Mikhail Pletnev and his newly formed Russian National Orchestra, a recording which PQ also admires in his review.

They were memorable sessions, a landmark 'first' by a new ensemble created against the background of Gorbachev's glasnost. The astonishing balance of intense preparation and high-octane execution threatened to dislodge loose plaster from the ceiling of South London's Blackheath Hall, shabby before imminent renovation and thick (in the foyer at least) with the smoke of potent Russian cigarettes. I also recall that not all of the brass players were yet in possession of first-class instruments, arriving at the sessions from shopping at a renowned central London brass emporium. I don't remember my being 'prepared to do things differently', as PQ remarks in his review, but it was a while ago, and my colleague Mike Hatch (who engineered) and I certainly felt challenged to do our best in sessions which even at that stage seemed destined to be 'historic'. The credit for their happening at all must be laid at the door of Simon Foster, founder of Virgin Classics and latterly co-director of Avie Records. There aren't many of Simon's ilk left in our profession these days – still fewer since his retirement this year. We all wish him long and happy decades ahead while the label continues to thrive under his partner Melanne Mueller. And we await his memoirs with impatience.

Andrew Keener

New Malden, London

... needs more music?

I have to disagree with Martin Cullingford's view (January Editorial, page 3) that he thinks the performance of the new Tchaikovsky Sixth conducted by Teodor Currentzis would be diminished by including another item on the CD.

At 46 minutes it is poor value and when a CD can accommodate up to 80 minutes of music, we could have had one of the

Letter of the Month



Three conductors in one family: taking the lead from Neeme, a champion of so many composers

The Järvi family and recorded music

I wanted to say that I thoroughly enjoyed the interview with the three Järvis, Neeme, Paavo and Kristjan, in your January issue (page 14). It gave me some insight as to how they convey ideas and how conductors connect with the different orchestras they work with, particularly Neeme, a truly remarkable musician.

I became a classical music listener in the early 1980s. Since then, I have collected many CDs from various composers, in large part thanks to Neeme Järvi and recording companies like BIS, Orfeo and Chandos, willing to go beyond the usual repertoire. His recordings of the Glazunov and Dvořák symphonies, back then the only ones available on CD, I still enjoy hearing.

There have been many recordings of Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky over the years but not many of Tubin, Gade, Stenhammar, Halvorsen, Alfvén – all composers who, without such a conductor out there to champion them, might not have received such wonderful performances.

I remember Paavo Järvi from his early days, seeing him conduct the Albany Symphony – truly an excellent conductor. I am really enjoying his current Bruckner symphony cycle with the Frankfurt RSO on RCA. His and Kristjan's take on the different orchestras and conducting was very insightful as well. Great interview.

Richard Buchwalter

Liverpool, NY, USA

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less familiar works such as *The Tempest* or *Hamlet*, or even *Voyevoda*. If one does not want to listen to the whole disc, use the off button.

Mike Morfey

Streatham Vale, London

Klemperer's Don Giovanni

Reading Richard Lawrence's survey of recordings of Mozart's *Don Giovanni*

(March, page 106), I was astonished to find not even a passing reference to Otto Klemperer. The opera had been a constant preoccupation for Klemperer from his earliest days as a conductor, and throughout his life he performed it wherever and whenever he could. His 1948 performance from Budapest has been preserved on CD (in the form of highlights, sung in Hungarian, on

Hungaraton), and is remarkable for the relentless ferocity of its speeds. Klemperer's ill health and, in particular, his bi-polar condition, could play havoc with his temperament and with performance.

His 1955 live version from Cologne (on Testament) is slower than that of 1948, but highly dramatic. The famed Giulini is indeed a very fine recording, but, as Richard Osborne has pointed out, it came about by default, in that Klemperer was scheduled to record it in 1959, but three days into the sessions, he had to withdraw with a severe attack of pericarditis. Klemperer's view of Mozart was elemental, spacious and, arguably, realised through a Beethovenian perspective.

Undeterred by the misfortune of relinquishing the 1959 recording, and undeterred by the rapturous reception it received, Klemperer returned to *Don Giovanni* in 1966 in a monumental and exhilarating recording with some of his favourite singers at their very best: Nicolai Ghiaurov, Franz Crass, Nicolai Gedda, Christa Ludwig, Walter Berry and Mirella Freni. It remains one of his finest recordings, and captured him at a stage in his late career when tempi, structure and energy were completely within his grasp.

OBITUARY

A fine British bass-baritone who recorded extensively

RAIMUND HERINCX

Bass-baritone

Born August 23, 1927

Died February 10, 2018



Born in London, though trained in Belgium and Milan, Raimund Herincx was an admired singer on the UK and international musical scene for

nearly four decades. Known for his crystal-clear diction, firm bass-baritone voice and commanding stage presence, he made his stage debut in 1950 (as Figaro in Mozart's opera at Welsh National Opera) and by the end of the decade was singing Count Almaviva, to great acclaim, at Sadler's Wells.

From the late 1950s onwards he was a frequent member of Sadler's Wells' casts and sang over 40 different parts including Nick Shadow in Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* and many Italian roles. At Covent Garden he was seen as Escamillo (*Carmen*), Alfio (*Cavalleria rusticana*) and as Macbeth. By the 1970s he was

It should not be overlooked by anyone who loves this opera.

Keith Pearce

Penzance, Cornwall

More from Manze?

In your article about Andrew Manze (March) he says that he would love to record the major orchestral works of Stenhammar. In 2011 Mr Manze recorded, for CPO, Volume 1 of the orchestral works of another Swedish composer Lars-Erik Larssen. Why have no subsequent volumes yet appeared?

Anthony Ogden

Weybridge, Surrey

Editorial notes

Regarding 'In the Studio' (March, page 10), it was Yeol Eum Son who recorded Mozart's Piano Concerto No 21 for Onyx.

In the review of New College, Oxford's Evensongs (March, page 128) it was described as the first choir of its kind to webcast its services; St Thomas's, New York were actually the pioneers, while St John's, Cambridge were first in the UK.

The titling for our Bruckner/Strauss review (March, page 29) should have been Bruckner: Symphony No 2 (not No 3).

NEXT MONTH MAY 2018



Birgit Nilsson, 100 years on

Mike Ashman celebrates the enduring legacy of the Swedish soprano –and you can too, courtesy of a free CD previewing an anniversary box set due from Sony Classical and the Birgit Nilsson Foundation.

Roderick Williams: a unique Winterreise

The British baritone is on a mission with his new, English-language Schubert

Andrew Nethsingha on Vaughan Williams

The Director of Music at St John's, Cambridge talks about his choir's new recording project

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Chopin Pf Conc No 2. Pf Wks (pp1960). *Block.*
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Vodenitcharov Snow Woman. *Ens l'itineraire/Abe.*
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⑆ **GEN18601**

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Vivaldi Gloria. Stabat mater. *Scholl/Salzburg Bach Ch/Bach*
Consort, Vienna/Dubrovsky. ⑆ **99165**

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Bindman/Lin. ⑆ ② **GP777/8**

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'Style galant' for Chbr & Ch. *L'Arcadia/Hofbauer.* ⑆ **GMCD7806**

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Mihneva. ⑆ **GMCD7810**

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- Mozart** Concs on One, Two & Three Pfs. *Tryon/Donohoe/Momen/RPO/van Steen/Brott*. (F) **SOMMCD268-2**

- Various Cpsrs** Gluepot Connection. *Londinium Chbr Ch/Griffiths, A*. (F) **SOMMCD0180**

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- Tosti** 1916: The Last Songs. *Scandaletti/Piacentini*. (M) **LDV14033**

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- Burwell** Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri. *OST*. (F) ③ **302 067 536-1**

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




















- Mozart** Nozze di Figaro. Così fan tutte. Entführung aus dem Serail. *Sols/Glyndebourne Op*. (S) ⑤ **DVD OA1245BD**; (F) ③ ③ **OA8D7242BD**

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- Various Cpsrs** Grandes interprètes. *Yepes*. (M) ② **DVD SFMDVD223**

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Akram Khan

The renowned dancer and choreographer on how his background as an Indian classical dancer has helped to shape him as a musician

When you train as an Indian classical dancer, you normally learn two disciplines side by side: how to dance and how to play the tabla [a pair of drums used in traditional Indian music]. But my teacher wanted me to learn tabla first and, since there were always people performing at my parents' house, it wasn't long before I was accompanying them. I was only a child then, but I'd be playing well into the night.

I didn't just listen to Indian classical music though. I loved Michael Jackson, rap, hip hop ... My mother was studying at university and also working at Decca in the evenings, and she would bring home scratched records of Tom Jones, Cliff Richards and Abba. But my dad liked watching these Bollywood films on VHS, and if my mother started playing one of her records, my father would turn up the volume of his film! This clash of cultures made perfect sense to me – if you listen to something enough, I suppose it seems normal.

I really only started getting into Western classical music in the last five to 10 years, probably after meeting and working with the French ballerina Sylvie Guillem, but now I enjoy listening to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner ... I love contemporary classical composers like Max Richter, Johann Jóhannsson and Arvo Pärt, and of course I've worked with Nitin Sawhney many times. I love his mind as much as his craft – he's a great thinker. I'm drawn to composers whose music has movement and energy but is also emotionally driven.

When I worked on *Giselle* for English Ballet, I was reminded of the similarities between Indian classical dance and classical ballet. Both are concerned with rigour, form, precision and perfection. You can approach a classical art form with the intention of preserving it or by allowing it to be relevant today. I try to work with artists who are so confident in their classical style that they have the desire to pierce holes in it and see what comes through. Creating pores in the classical 'bubble' and allowing the present atmosphere to enter is what drives me.

I was very moved by ENB's commitment as a company. Three weeks before *Giselle* opened, it became clear that it wasn't working with the composer we'd chosen, and we felt we had everything to gain by bringing in Vincenzo Lamagna. I had worked with him before – he's just starting his career, but he's super-talented – and I thought, 'Let's go for it'. The Music Director Gavin Sutherland was really supportive, and the three of us came together to create this marriage between electronics and live orchestra – an intimate yet epic soundscape.

Vincenzo has also composed the music for my latest work, *Xenos*, about the experience of colonial soldiers during the First World War. We created it at The Grange in Hampshire, which was a positive experience. There's no Wi-Fi or phone



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signal there, and being isolated like that allowed the work to manifest itself in a sense of loneliness that tied in with the theme of the piece; there was a feeling of being disconnected from the world, which these Indian soldiers – fighting a war that didn't belong to them – would surely have identified with.

When I work on something new, I want everyone – the composer, the musicians, the dancers, the designers – to be the authors of what we're creating. Allowing your craft to be judged by others is a fragile but necessary process. For *Xenos*, we have five musicians playing live – a South Indian percussionist, a vocalist, a violinist, a singing double bassist and a saxophonist. They don't just play melodies – Vincenzo always wants to use instruments in unconventional ways.

In the West, you have dance – and you have music. But as an Indian concept, the two elements are always linked. I'm a dancer but I think like a musician. If you play the tabla, you're first and foremost a musician because you have to conduct what's happening on stage. And if you're an Indian classical dancer, you're also a musician because you're creating rhythms with your feet. So for me it's simple. When I see dance, I hear music. And when I hear music, I see movement. **G**

'Xenos', in which Akram Khan makes his final performance as a dancer in a full-length piece, is at Sadler's Wells, May 29 – June 9 (visit sadlerswells.com); the inaugural DANCE@THEGRANGE is on June 7 & 10 (visit thegrangefestival.co.uk)

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